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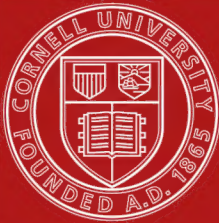
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THE RIGHT HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

*THE MAN AND THE STATESMAN*







*August Photo*

*Plummer & Allen Ph. Co.*

*J. Chamberlain*  
*August 1900*







THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

*THE MAN AND  
THE STATESMAN*

BY

N. MURRELL MARRIS  
/

WITH PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECE  
AND THIRTY-TWO FULL-PAGE  
ILLUSTRATIONS AND PORTRAIT

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## PREFACE

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TWO considerations induced me to attempt the difficult task of writing an account of a career as yet unfinished, and of so important and varied a character as that of the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, the present Secretary of State for the Colonies.

In the first place, I could find no book dealing with Mr. Chamberlain's life, with the exception of a sketch by Mr. S. H. Jeyes in "Public Men of To-day," written entirely from the political standpoint, and a small pamphlet by Mr. B. C. Skottowe, published about 1885, and now out of print.

I hope this book may supply what has been wanting in this direction.

Secondly. A just estimate of Mr. Chamberlain's character and work should result from accurate information concerning his career.

Mr. Chamberlain's position as Colonial Secretary and his intimate connection with the great scheme of Imperial Federation, have made his history and personality of considerable interest to those of his fellow-subjects in the Colonies and throughout the world, who have that great project deeply at heart—while in Birmingham no apology

will be needed for a fuller account of the work of one of her most distinguished citizens.

It only remains for me to acknowledge the help I have received, and to say that I am entirely responsible for any opinions expressed in this book, which, however, is not intended to be a criticism, but a narrative.

My thanks are due first to Mr. Chamberlain himself, for permission to photograph Highbury and the many interesting mementoes it contains, including a selection from his private collection of cartoons, and also for kindly giving a special sitting for his portrait, which appears as a frontispiece to the book.

I am indebted to Mrs. Chamberlain for information concerning her family and for photographs of the late Honourable W. C. Endicott, Governor Endicott, and the family mansion at Salem, Mass., U. S. A., and especially for permission to include the portrait of herself contained in the photograph of a family group which was taken at Highbury expressly for this book. I wish further most gratefully to acknowledge the help accorded me by Mrs. and Miss Chamberlain, in verifying details connected with family history and personal matters, and for giving me all the information in their power relative thereto.

My thanks are due for photographs, for information, for criticism, and for personal recollections, to Miss Pace, the late Dr. Gibbs Blake, the Cordwainers' Company, the Right Honourable Jesse Collings, T. H. Haynes Esq., Temple Orme, Esq., L. Paton Esq., (Head Master of London University College School), Alfred Preston, Esq., and many others. To all those who prefer to receive no individual thanks I here beg to express my gratitude for kindly help.

Special acknowledgments are due to the Proprietors of



*Punch*, the *Westminster Gazette*, and Mr. F. Carruthers Gould for permission to reproduce their cartoons in this book.

The Proprietors of the *Birmingham Dart*, *Owl*, and *Free Lance* have also kindly allowed the use of cartoons.

Much information concerning the political history of the period treated of in this book has been found in the columns of the *Birmingham Daily Post*, and I am greatly indebted to the Editor of that paper, as well as to the Editor of the *Times*, for permission to make extracts from their reports of Mr. Chamberlain's speeches: also to Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein & Co., for similar permission in respect of their volumes entitled, "The Irish Question" and "Home Rule."

N. MURRELL MARRIS.

October 1900.

## ERRATA

Page 147 line 15, *read* "1876" *for* "1875."

,, 224 ,, 16, *read* "advocacy" *for* "expediency."

,, 364 ,, 1, *read* "Unionists" *for* "Liberal-Unionists."

# CONTENTS

---

## Book I

### LIFE IN LONDON

1836—1854

#### CHAPTER I

##### ANCESTRY AND BIRTH

	PAGE
Introduction — Ancestry — Richard Serjeant, Preacher — Daniel Chamberlain, Maltster—Mr. Chamberlain, Senior—The Cordwainers' Company and the Chamberlains—Birth—Camberwell Grove—Miss Pace's School . . . . .	3

#### CHAPTER II

##### YOUTH AND EARLY TRAINING

1845—1854

Historical Retrospect—School at Canonbury—London University College School—Begins Business—Home Life at Highbury, London . . . . .	15
--	----

## CONTENTS

## Book II

## LIFE IN BIRMINGHAM

*COMMERCIAL AND MUNICIPAL LIFE*

1854—1876

## CHAPTER III

## BIRMINGHAM FIFTY YEARS AGO

Early Days in Birmingham—Growth of the City—Birmingham Political Union and its founder, Atwood—Reform Agitation of 1832—Atwood and Scholefield, the First Members—Birmingham is made a Corporation—Its Social Life—Birmingham and Midland Institute—Musical Festivals—Gaol Scandals—Loyalty of the Town—Visit of Princess Victoria . . . . .	PAGE 25
--	------------

## CHAPTER IV

## COMMERCIAL LIFE

1854—1864

Mr. Chamberlain Comes to Birmingham, 1854—The Screw Trade and his Commercial Policy—Attack on this in 1884—The Defence—Mr. Chamberlain and his Workmen—Private Life—His Unitarian Friends—The Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society—In Society—His Marriage . . . . .	37
---	----

## CHAPTER V

## BIRMINGHAM POLITICS. BRIGHT'S INFLUENCE

1854—1867

First Speech in Birmingham—Corn Laws—Foundation of Liberal Association, 1865—Struggle for Reform Bill of 1867 . . . . .	56
---	----

## CHAPTER VI

## EARLY POLITICAL WORK

1867—1869

Elections, 1868—Irish Church Disestablishment Bill, 1869—First Town Hall Speech, etc. . . . .	64
---	----

# CONTENTS

xi

## CHAPTER VII

### THE NATIONAL EDUCATION LEAGUE AND THE BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL BOARD

1867—1873

	PAGE
Foundation of the Birmingham Education Society, 1867, and the National Education League, 1869—Speech at the Education Conference— <i>Punch</i> on the League—Political Work in Con- nection with Forster's Education Bill of 1870—Birmingham School Board, 1873-6 . . . . .	74

## CHAPTER VIII

### MR. COUNCILLOR CHAMBERLAIN DEMANDS AN ADVANCED LIBERAL PROGRAMME

1870—1873

First Charge of Republicanism—Why Made—First Article: "The Liberal Party and its Leaders"—First Programme: "Free Church, Free Land, Free Labour, Free Schools"—Contests Sheffield as an Advanced Liberal, January 1874 . . . . .	87
---	----

## CHAPTER IX

### GENERAL MUNICIPAL WORK

1873-1876

The Birmingham Town Council—Early Days—The Reformers—Mr. Chamberlain's Supporters—His Municipal Policy—Council House—The Prince's Visit—Gifts to the Town . . . . .	99
---	----

## CHAPTER X

### A MUNICIPAL REFORMER

Gas, Water, and Improvement Schemes . . . . .	110
---	-----

## CHAPTER XI

### SOCIAL LIFE AND INFLUENCE

Retires from Business—Private Life—Second Marriage—Life at "Southbourne"—Birmingham Men—The Comic Papers—Per- sonal Appearance . . . . .	124
--	-----



## Book III

## LIFE AS A LIBERAL M.P.

1876—1886

## CHAPTER XII

## THE NEW M.P. FOR BIRMINGHAM

	PAGE
Elected M.P., June 1876—First Speech to Constituents—First Speech in House, August 1876—Its Reception—First Work—The Gothenburg System and Later Opinions on Temperance Reform—Style of Speaking . . . . .	137

## CHAPTER XIII

## ORGANISING THE LIBERAL PARTY

1877—1880

Dissolution of National Education League, 1877—Federation of Liberal Associations—Mr. Gladstone's Visit to Birmingham, May 1877— <i>Fortnightly</i> Articles, "The New Political Organisation" and "The Caucus"—Mr. Chamberlain at Rochdale—John Bright's Tribute—Francis Schnadhorst . . . . .	155
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE MINISTER'S APPRENTICESHIP

1876—1880

Relations to Leaders—Foreign and Colonial Opinions—Speech on Flogging—Position in the House—General Election of 1880 . . . . .	167
--	-----

## CHAPTER XV

## THE MINISTER AT HOME

1880

Free Libraries Fire—1879—Chamberlain Memorial—Mr. Richard Chamberlain as Mayor, 1880 and 1881—Life at Highbury—The Arts' Club . . . . .	176
---	-----

# CHAPTER XVI

## THE MINISTER AT WORK

1880—1885

Leader of the Radicals—Constructive Legislation—Bankruptcy Act —Patents Act—Merchant Shipping Bill—Fight for the Franchise	PAGE 186
---	-------------

# CHAPTER XVII

## IRELAND. COERCION OR CONCILIATION?

1880—1885

Relations with Mr. Parnell—Coercion or Conciliation—Kilmainham Treaty—Phoenix Park Murder—Mr. Parnell's Repudiation of the Liberals . . . . .	198
---	-----

# CHAPTER XVIII

## THE FALL OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF 1880—1885

The Boers 1881-1884—Our Position in Egypt—Gordon—Defeat of the Government, June 1885—Attitude of the Irish . . . . .	208
---	-----

# CHAPTER XIX

## THE STOP-GAP GOVERNMENT AND THE UNAUTHORISED PROGRAMME

Lord Salisbury in Power—The Conservatives and Lord Randolph Churchill—The Election Campaign, June-November—"Ran- som" and Warrington Speeches . . . . .	215
---	-----

# CHAPTER XX

## RUMOURS OF HOME RULE

AUTUMN, 1885—FEBRUARY, 1886

Return of the Seven Members, Birmingham Elections, November 1885—Rumours of Home Rule—Defeat of Lord Salisbury, January 1886—Events of the Session . . . . .	226
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXI

## HOME RULE IN THE CABINET

FEBRUARY 1886—APRIL 1886

	PAGE
February 1886—April 1886—Mr. Gladstone's Ministry—Mr. Chamberlain becomes President of Local Government Board—His Resignation—The Home Rule Bill—First Reading—Mr. Chamberlain's Explanation in the House . . . . .	234

## CHAPTER XXII

## HOME RULE IN THE COUNTRY

APRIL 1886—AUGUST 1886

Mr. Chamberlain's Meeting with his Constituents, April 21st—May Meetings—The Seceders Determine to Vote against the Second Reading—The Radical Unionists . . . . .	251
--	-----

## Book IV

## LIFE AS A LIBERAL UNIONIST

*SECTION I—Out of Office*

## CHAPTER XXIII

## THE RADICAL UNIONIST

AUGUST 1886—NOVEMBER 1887

After the Defeat of the Home Rule Bill—Elections, July 1886—Conservatives in Power—Campaign against Home Rule—Ireland under Lord Salisbury—Plan of Campaign—Mr. Chamberlain's Political Tour in Scotland and Ireland . . . . .	267
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXIV

## IN AMERICA

1887—1888

Settlement of Fisheries Dispute with America—Return to England—Speeches—Second Visit to America—Marriage with Miss Endicott—Welcome in Birmingham . . . . .	278
---	-----

# CONTENTS

xv

## CHAPTER XXV

### UNIONIST LEGISLATION (DOMESTIC AND IRISH)

1888—1892

	PAGE
Completing the Social Programme—Free Education—Allotments Act—Housing of the Working-Classes Act, 1890—Ireland: Parnell Commission— <i>Fortnightly</i> Article, "Local Government and Ireland"—Land Act, 1891—Irish Local Government Bill (1892) withdrawn—Unionist Measures for Ireland, 1887-1892 . . .	286

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE UNIONIST IN OPPOSITION

1892—1895

The Elections of 1892—Mr. Austen Chamberlain—His Maiden Speech—Position of Liberal-Unionists in Birmingham and Midlands—The Second Home Rule Bill—Mr. Chamberlain's Speech—The Home Rule Duel—The Lords Throw out the Bill—Mr. Chamberlain's Articles—The Rosebery Administration—Domestic Legislation Between 1892 and 1895—Lord Rosebery and the Peers . . . . .	298
--	-----

## *SECTION II—In Office—Colonial Secretary*

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE RETURN TO POWER.—DOMESTIC AND IRISH POLICY

1895—1900

Defeat of Lord Rosebery's Government—Elections July 1895—Liberal Unionists in the Salisbury Administration—The Colonial Secretary—His Interest in Domestic Legislation—Workmen's Compensation Act—Acquisition of Small Houses Bill—Old-age Pensions—Ireland—Local Government Bill 1898—Mr. Chamberlain at Glasgow 1897—Address on "Patriotism" as Lord Rector of the University . . . . .	307
---	-----

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## SOUTH AFRICA: THE RAID AND THE INQUIRY

PAGE

- I. After the London Convention—Review of Outlanders' Position—Origin of Raid Movement—Mr. Chamberlain and the Raiders—Kruger's "Magnanimity"
- II. After the Raid—Address to Constituents—Meeting of Parliament 1896—Asks for Inquiry—Trial of Raiders—The Inquiry—The Company and the Colonial Office—Report of Commission of Inquiry—Debate in the House, July 1897—Attempt to Re-open the Inquiry February, 1900—Consequences of the Raid 321

## CHAPTER XXIX

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY AND THE TRANSVAAL CRISIS  
1896—1899

- I. From the Raid to the Conference:—Dispute on the Alien Immigration Act—July—January—Appointment of Sir A. Milner, March 1897—Investigation of the Outlanders' Grievances—Boer and Briton—Their Respective Positions—Murder of Edgar—Outlanders' Petition—Sir A. Milner's Famous Despatch—The Colonial Dutch—Further Repudiation of Suzerainty—Bloemfontein Conference, May 31st—June 6th, 1899—Kruger Demands Arbitration—Failure of Conference.
- II. From the Conference to the Ultimatum:—Debate in the House July 1899—Close of the Negotiations—Highbury Speech August 26th—"Despatch A." August 28th—Boer Reply—"Despatch B." September 8th—Boer Reply—"Despatch C." September 22nd—Boer Reply—The Ultimatum—Mr. Chamberlain's Policy throughout—Importance of Suzerainty—Kruger's Responsibility for the War—The Colonies and the Empire—A United Cabinet . . . . . 337

## CHAPTER XXX

## THE GOVERNMENT AND THE COUNTRY

- Autumn Session, October 1899—Attack on Ministry—Mr. Chamberlain's Defence—Recapitulation of Dispute and Negotiations—Parliament Prorogued—Leicester Speech—Speech in Birmingham—Visit to Dublin—Session of 1900—Speeches of Lord Salisbury, Lord Rosebery, Mr. Balfour, and Mr. Chamberlain—The Government and the War Office—Majuba Day—Ladysmith and Mafeking Day—Fall of Pretoria . . . . . 359



CHAPTER XXXI

GENERAL COLONIAL POLICY

	PAGE
Mr. Chamberlain's Colonial Views; Sympathy instead of Apathy in Colonial Affairs—1. Development of Trade—2. Fulfilment of Obligations of Empire—3. Imperial Federation—The Australian Commonwealth Bill, May 14th, 1900—Second Reading May 21st	378

CHAPTER XXXII

THE CHANCELLOR OF BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY

Mason, Science College—Its Growth—First Idea of a University—Mr. Chamberlain's Work in Connection with It—Reception of the Charter—Mr. Chamberlain and His Constituents—At a Birmingham Town's Meeting—Liberal-Unionist Association Meeting, Birmingham, May 1900	393
---	-----

CHAPTER XXXIII

MR. CHAMBERLAIN AT WORK

The Unionist Alliance—Its Permanence—Relations with Mr. Balfour—Lord Salisbury and Mr. Gladstone—A Day at the Colonial Office	405
---	-----

CHAPTER XXXIV

MR. CHAMBERLAIN AT HOME. LONDON AND HIGHBURY

Life in London—The Town House—A Day's Work—Mrs. Chamberlain's Work—Life at Highbury—The House—Visitors—The Farm, Gardens, Recreations, Holidays—A Day at Highbury	415
---	-----

CHAPTER XXXV

THE REAL MR. CHAMBERLAIN

Mr. Chamberlain's Family—Some Reasons for Misapprehension of His Character and Personality	423
--	-----

## APPENDIX

	PAGE
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE—Mr. Chamberlain's Career . . .	43 <sup>1</sup>
"          "      England and the Transvaal . . .	435
LIST OF AUTHORITIES CONSULTED . . .	438
LIST OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S ARTICLES . . .	439
MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S ADDRESS . . .	440
INDEX . . .	445

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

---

	PAGE
PORTRAIT OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN TAKEN ESPECIALLY FOR THIS BOOK	<i>Frontispiece</i>
MR. J. CHAMBERLAIN, MASTER OF THE CORDWAINERS' COMPANY, FATHER OF THE RIGHT HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN . . . . .	4
CAMBERWELL GROVE, BIRTHPLACE OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN . . . . .	16
LONDON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SCHOOL IN 1850, GOWER STREET, W.C. . . . .	48
EARLIEST KNOWN PORTRAIT OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN . . . . .	80
PORTRAIT OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN WHEN A BIRMINGHAM TOWN COUNCILLOR . . . . .	80
PORTRAIT OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN TAKEN DURING HIS MAYORALTY . . . . .	80
MR. CHAMBERLAIN IN 1888, AT THE TIME OF HIS MARRIAGE TO MISS ENDICOTT	80
SOUTHBOURNE, EDGBASTON, MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S HOME BEFORE AND DURING HIS MAYORALTY . . . . .	96
HIGHBURY, NEAR BIRMINGHAM, MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S COUNTRY HOUSE . . . . .	112
THE ORCHID HOUSE, HIGHBURY . . . . .	128
THE LIBRARY, HIGHBURY . . . . .	144
THE HALL, HIGHBURY . . . . .	160
"TILTING." COLONEL BURNABY'S FIRST APPEARANCE CANVASSING BIR- MINGHAM (CARTOON FROM BIRMINGHAM "DART") . . . . .	172
BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY AND THE CHAMBERLAIN MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN . . . . .	180
"THE CHERUB!" (CARTOON FROM "PUNCH") . . . . .	200
"EASTER EGGS" (CARTOON FROM BIRMINGHAM "OWL") . . . . .	224
"POOR TWINS" (CARTOON FROM BIRMINGHAM "FREE LANCE") . . . . .	256
"SHUT IN!" (CARTOON FROM "PUNCH") . . . . .	272
GOVERNOR JOHN ENDICOTT OF MASSACHUSETTS . . . . .	280
THE LATE HON. WILLIAM C. ENDICOTT, MRS. CHAMBERLAIN'S FATHER . . . . .	288
THE ENDICOTT FAMILY MANSION, SALEM, MASS., U.S.A. . . . .	296

	PAGE
THE RIGHT HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN AND HIS SON, MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, (M.P. FOR EAST WORCESTERSHIRE), AFTER MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S RETURN FROM HIS AMERICAN MISSION . . . . .	300
THE MARQUESS OF HARTINGTON AT HIGHBURY . . . . .	312
MR. CHAMBERLAIN AS LORD RECTOR OF GLASGOW UNIVERSITY, INSTALLED NOVEMBER 3RD, 1897 . . . . .	316
"THE PARLIAMENTARY TOURNAMENT" (CARTOON FROM "PUNCH") . . . . .	324
"THE STORMY PETREL!" (CARTOON FROM "PUNCH") . . . . .	336
"TAKING THE REINS" (CARTOON FROM "PUNCH") . . . . .	348
"'SAY SUZERAIN'" (CARTOON BY MR. F. C. GOULD) . . . . .	360
"SQUEALING AND SQUEEZING" (CARTOON BY MR. F. C. GOULD) . . . . .	368
"IN THE COLONIAL WARD" (CARTOON BY MR. F. C. GOULD) . . . . .	376
MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND THE COLONIAL PREMIERS . . . . .	384
MR. CHAMBERLAIN ADDRESSING HIS CONSTITUENTS IN THE TOWN HALL, BIRMINGHAM . . . . .	400
MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S PRIVATE ROOM AT THE COLONIAL OFFICE . . . . .	408
A FAMILY GROUP AT HIGHBURY . . . . .	416
THE RIGHT HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN IN THE ORCHID HOUSE . . . . .	424

**Book I**  
**LIFE IN LONDON**  
**1836—1854**



## CHAPTER I

### *ANCESTRY AND BIRTH*

INTRODUCTION—ANCESTRY—RICHARD SERJEANT, PREACHER—  
DANIEL CHAMBERLAIN, MALTSTER—MR. CHAMBERLAIN, SENIOR  
—THE CORDWAINERS' COMPANY AND THE CHAMBERLAINS—  
BIRTH—CAMBERWELL GROVE—MISS PACE'S SCHOOL.

LIVES, like dramas, interest sometimes by incident, sometimes by personality. The interest of the life of the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain centres chiefly round his personality. Both as a practical administrator and as a statesman engaged in constructive legislation he has attracted continuous attention.

In the first capacity his name will always be associated with Birmingham. It has fallen to the lot of few statesmen to be as intimately connected with one city as Mr. Chamberlain has been, and no narrative of his work would be satisfactory which did not show how large a part this city has played in his life, and how much strength he has drawn from the steady support of its citizens. He himself would be the first to acknowledge that he owes much to Birmingham. There is no better political nursery than this Midland city, famous for its independence of thought. There is something in its atmosphere—in the character of its citizens; in their application of business methods to the testing of theories, political or scientific; their independence; their determination to succeed, called by some "push" and "bumptiousness," and by others who understand it "energy" and "self-reliance"—that conduces to political success.

As a municipal administrator and reformer, Mr. Chamber-

lain found the experience gained during his commercial life in Birmingham of great value. When he joined the councils of the city he already knew both masters and men thoroughly, having had fourteen years' work among them before entering the Town Council as representative of a ward chiefly peopled by working men.

Though Mr. Chamberlain has often alluded to his London birth and ancestry, he has never forgotten that Birmingham is the city of his adoption, and that he considers himself to be "a citizen of no mean city." Probably one reason of his preference for it is very simple. He feels that the men among whom he has worked and is working know him as he is, know his faults and his virtues; to them he is neither infallible nor unscrupulous, but a faithful friend, a good comrade, and a trusted leader; while men with whom he has never worked, and who look upon him merely from a political standpoint, are apt to judge less favourably: for politicians are seldom weighed as justly as the private citizen.

In his second capacity Mr. Chamberlain's name will always be associated with Imperial Federation. That great dream, that great ideal, is in men's minds. The belief that it must come, that it is even now coming, and that it will conduce to the peace of the world, is spreading day by day. The future of the man who has done something to convert the dream into a reality, and who hopes to do yet more, will be watched with even greater interest than his past has been.

"Nobody," said an American paper on one occasion, "ever suspected that Mr. Chamberlain had a grandfather, to say nothing of a great-grandfather."

Mr. Chamberlain can trace his forefathers back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. His ancestors belonged to the unromantic middle class, and possessed the virtues of that class—uprightness, shrewdness, sober common sense, determination, and industry.





MR. J. CHAMBERLAIN, MASTER OF THE CORDWAINERS' COMPANY,  
FATHER OF THE RIGHT HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN.

Reproduced by permission of the Cordwainers' Company.



Through his father's mother, Mr. Chamberlain is directly connected with Richard Serjeant, of Kidderminster, **Maternal Ancestry.** who was born in 1621. He was a clergyman of the Church of England, and he married Hannah, daughter of William Spicer, Vicar of Stone, near Kidderminster, whose ancestors had suffered in the cause of religion. Serjeant also suffered for conscience' sake. As Mr. Chamberlain said, in speaking of his family history, "I can claim descent from one of the two thousand ejected ministers who, in the time of the Stuarts (August 24th, 1662), left home and work and profit rather than accept the State-made creed which it was sought to force upon them."

Serjeant was a great friend of Richard Baxter, the celebrated Kidderminster preacher. He seems to have been a man of substance ; in 1650 he had bought a small estate near Hagley, Worcestershire, and to this place he retired when he left his Kidderminster curacy. He died in 1696, and was buried in Hagley churchyard. The estate passed to his second daughter. Sarah, his eldest daughter, married Francis Witton, of the Lye, near Stourbridge ; her great-granddaughter married Joseph Chamberlain, grandfather of the Colonial Secretary, who is thus sixth in descent from the ejected minister of Kidderminster.

It will be seen from this account that Mr. Chamberlain is in some measure a Midlander by descent, and that his ancestors lived in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, both Hagley and Stourbridge being but a few miles away, though in a different county.

The Chamberlain family come from Wiltshire. Daniel **Paternal Ancestry.** Chamberlain, who died at Laycock in 1760, was a maltster ; but his son William went to seek his fortune in London, and found it. He became a cordwainer, or worker in new leather—as distinguished from a cobeler, or worker in old—and in due time a Master of the Cordwainers' Company of the City of London, as did his sons William and Joseph, and his grandsons William, Joseph (Mr. Chamberlain's father), and Richard.

The connection of the family with the Company has lasted more than one hundred and twenty years. It is a very ancient company, which, as early as 1272, obtained an ordinance "for the relief and advancement of the whole business and to the end that all frauds and deceits may hereafter be avoided." For six centuries it exercised an active control over the leather industry, fixing prices and ordaining when and where boots and shoes might be sold. Its most distinguished member was one John Came, who,

at his death in 1796, left the sum of money now  
 1796. realising £36,400 in Consols, the dividends of which are applied to the relief of clergymen's widows, and of the deaf, dumb, and blind. During his lifetime he watched the distribution of the annual gift of £100 which, anonymously as "The Friend of Mankind," he had placed at the disposal of the Court of the Company.

A hundred years after John Came's death (May 13th, 1896),  
 1896. a beautiful window in the Cordwainers' Hall, to commemorate his benefactions, was unveiled by  
 Address: Mr. Chamberlain, and the address presented to him  
 Cordwainers' Hall. May. on that occasion refers to the long connection of his family with the Company:—

"RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR,—

"We are met together to do honour to the memory of Mr. John Came, a Liveryman and Benefactor of the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers, who died on May 13th, 1796; and the Company are highly gratified that you, the most distinguished Liveryman of the Company, are pleased to attend to unveil the Stained Glass Window which they have erected as a memorial of him, on this the centenary of his death. . . .

"The Company feel that there is a singular appropriateness in your performing the ceremony of unveiling the Memorial Window, on account of the long connection, extending over nearly two centuries, of your family with the Company.

"In all no less than six of your ancestors have filled

the office of Master of this Company, and it is gratifying to know that many other members of your family have been and still are connected with it.

**Connection with the Cordwainers' Company.** "The mutual good-will which existed between your ancestors and the other members of this ancient Guild is evidenced by the legacies of plate given by them on two occasions, which remain among our most valued possessions. . . .

"In conclusion, the Company desire to express a hope, which they feel sure is shared by their guests, that you may be spared in health and strength long to carry on happily and successfully the great work in which you are engaged for the benefit and welfare of our people."

Mr. Chamberlain, in his reply, said that circumstances had so long removed him from active life in the city of London, and left him so little opportunity of doing anything in connection with the work of the Company, that it would be almost a presumption on his part to represent the Company on such an occasion.

"But when I was told that you in your kindness would overlook this laxity of service, in consideration of the long connection of my family with this Company, then it seemed to me that I was bound to accept the compliment so gracefully offered, and the recognition of a friendship which has endured for so long. The two William Chamberlains referred to in the programme of the proceedings were one of them my great-grandfather and the other my great-uncle; and, in addition to them, my grandfather, my father, and my uncle were all in turn Masters of the Company, and took the greatest interest in its proceedings, and were ever foremost in upholding its rights and privileges. Under these circumstances I do not hesitate to say that it is a great pleasure to renew the memory of this relationship, and to recall, Master Hopwood, in your name and in the name of other members of the Court and Livery, the close friendships which formerly subsisted between our fathers and grandfathers, which were cemented by their common interest in the affairs of the Cordwainers' Company. . . .

"The Lord Mayor has reminded you that I am by birth

a Londoner. In fact I did not leave London until I was eighteen years of age. At that time I could say what I think could be said by very few members of this Livery—that I was the fourth generation of cordwainers who had practised their occupation in the same house and under the same name for one hundred and twenty years; and I admit that, though now Birmingham has become the city of my adoption and affection, yet one love does not necessarily cast out the other, and I have room enough in my heart for London as well as for Birmingham. Alderman Alliston has anticipated a wish that I was going to express. I also should like that the tradition which has lasted so long should not die out; and it is curious that a few weeks ago I was speaking to my eldest son, who is, of course, a native of Birmingham, but who, in answer to my inquiry, expressed a very strong wish to be allowed to take up his Livery, which I hope, therefore, he will do, with your kind permission, and at no distant date. It is very proper that I should be here, because one of my earliest recollections as a boy is dining with my father in your hall, on which occasion, I believe, I made my first public speech. . . .”

Mr. Chamberlain was early impressed with the importance of the ancient Guild to which his forefathers had belonged; and it is not too much to say that his deep sense of the dignity of municipal service and his capacity for public affairs are largely owing to his inheritance of the uprightness, experience, and zeal of his immediate ancestors.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, senior, is well remembered at the Cordwainers' Hall. According to the recollections of the Beadle of the Company:—

“He was an immovable man—nothing could turn him if he had made up his mind; pleasant and quiet in manner, but not to be moved from what he had said by anybody; you could see it in his face. His brother Richard was jolly-like, more easy-going; he was also a Master in the Company. I well remember the house in Milk Street where he and his brother (I'm speaking now of the Colonial Secretary) first learned their business as lads.”

A certain likeness to Mr. Chamberlain is to be traced

in the portrait of his father. It is that of a reserved man, with a thin face and somewhat severe air. His uncle Richard's portrait depicts a different type—ruddy, round-faced, wearing bushy whiskers and abundant curly hair, such a man as many of Dickens's illustrations have made us familiar with.

In 1834 Mr. Chamberlain, senior, married Caroline, daughter of Henry Harben, a provision merchant of London (the present Sir Henry Harben is a cousin of Mr. Chamberlain). By this marriage there were nine children. Of the six boys, one died in infancy, and Richard, the second son, died in April, 1899. Joseph, Arthur, Herbert, Walter, and the three daughters are all living and all married. The family were then, as now, Unitarians. They attended Carter Lane Chapel in the City, and, later, Unity Church, Upper Street, Islington. On the wall of this chapel is the following inscription :—

"IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF  
JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN,  
WHO FOR MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS  
WAS A CONSISTENT WORSHIPPER IN CARTER LANE CHAPEL, CITY,  
AND IN THIS CHURCH,  
AND A GENEROUS SUPPORTER OF THEIR CONNECTED INSTITUTIONS.  
DIED AT MOOR GREEN HALL, BIRMINGHAM, 1874."

Unitarians very frequently intermarry, and the numerous descendants of Richard Serjeant (he had twenty-two grandchildren) are still connected by marriage. The following are the names of those of his descendants who subscribed to the tablet erected in 1885 to the memory of their common ancestor in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London :—

"THIS TABLET IS RAISED BY DESCENDANTS BELONGING  
TO THE FAMILIES OF  
CHAMBERLAIN, GILL, HORNBLOWER, LEE, NETTLEFOLD, OSLER,  
PRESTON, WARE, AND WATSON."

The families of Chamberlain, Nettlefold, and Osler, it may be noted, have intermarried with those of Smith, Ryland,

and Kenrick, among others; and it would be difficult to name a well-known Unitarian family in Birmingham that is not connected by marriage with one of the above-named descendants of Richard Serjeant.

Thus, though Mr. Chamberlain is a Londoner by birth, as were his father and grandfather before him, yet, by virtue of his grandmother's Midland descent, of his many Birmingham relatives and connections, he has a very good claim to be considered almost a Birmingham man. His strongest claim to be so considered, lies in the devotion of the best forty-five years of his life, both in and out of Parliament, to the service of his adopted city.

Joseph Chamberlain was born on July 8th, 1836, at No. 3, **Birth. July 8th, 1836.** Camberwell Grove, in the district of Camberwell. To reach his birthplace it is necessary to cross one of the noisiest and most densely populated districts of South London. From the Houses of Parliament to Camberwell Grove the direct way crosses Westminster Bridge and leads to the spot known familiarly as "The Elephant and Castle," where six roads diverge. Down Walworth Road, along which stalls in the roadway make the heavy traffic still more difficult, the trams jingle continuously until they stop at Camberwell Green, a quiet spot in the midst of all the turmoil.

The neighbourhood of Camberwell when the prosperous City man and Master of a great City Company lived there was very different from what it now is. Much of the road to London was still open and pleasant; but the Grove itself is singularly little altered, as compared with other suburbs not farther removed from Westminster. It is even now a quiet, old-fashioned street, thickly planted with trees. A few yards from its junction with the main road stands the Mary Ann Datchelor School, housed in a red brick building, with a gilt effigy of the foundress in her old-world dress over the gate. Above this school the Grove begins to climb Champion Hill; and among the newer houses may be seen a low white cottage with trellised porch, and even



a thatched roof, as yet untouched by the merciless builder. Dignified three-storeyed houses, with three rows of severely respectable windows and long flights of steps, are, with gardens of generous size, sandwiched in between the smaller villas. In one of the former, a somewhat dark and gloomy-looking house standing at the end of a row, Joseph Chamberlain was born.

Close by is the school which he attended, at the age of eight, for one year. The ordinary course of **Childhood at Camberwell** "simple English" was provided, and eight guineas a year were the fees, without Latin, French, and drilling, which were extras. His schoolmistress, Miss Pace, still keeps the ledgers of fifty years ago, in which the names of the school-books then used are entered. Smith's "Principia," "Latin Delectus," and "Le Petit Précepteur" were among them. But Joseph was too young to begin French, though he was familiar with "The Guide to Knowledge," "Little Arthur's History of England," "Rhymes for Youthful Historians," and "Geography," by "A Lady." Butler's "Gradations" created "quite a revolution in the art of teaching to read, and the boys were not promoted to reading from the Bible till they had mastered the drudgery."

Miss Pace had many interesting recollections of Mr. Chamberlain's school-days to relate to the writer:—

"I was very particular," she said, "about my pupils reading and speaking distinctly. We used to get a number of little American books from Allman's, in Oxford Street, with nice anecdotes about the kings and queens: it was a circulating library for children's books. As to poetry, I fancy Mr. Chamberlain would be beyond learning from 'Hymns for Infant Minds.'"

The fact that the family were Unitarians made little difference in the boy's lessons.

"I don't think he would learn the Church Catechism," she said; "but he certainly took his Bible lesson with the others, for I remember a game he joined in with the rest

of them one day after they had been reading about 'Priests of Baal' in 'Line upon Line.' We heard a curious sort of sing-song in the playground, and, on going to see what it meant, I found that the boys had stuck some clay or mortar on to the garden wall, and were crouching down before it in the attitude which had been represented in the picture in the chapter they had read."

Joseph Chamberlain and his schoolfellows were, in her opinion, very like men in Parliament in the time they wasted in talking, and in their anxiety to be first in everything.

"At one time," she said, "they wanted to get up a 'Peace Society.' I was very much against it, as I felt sure it would stir up quarrels among them; and they were, of course, forbidden to fight. However, like men, I knew they would get tired of it if they had their own way. One afternoon I heard there had been trouble while I had been out, and I sent for the boys to interrogate the offenders. It was just as I had expected. They had been fighting as to who should be the President of the Peace Society, and, of course, Joseph Chamberlain was among them. He didn't like being behind anybody, and when he did fight he was in earnest about it."

"As a child Joseph Chamberlain didn't take things easily; he went deeply into them, and was very serious for a boy. He didn't care much for games; he was not so much solitary as *solid*, industrious, and intelligent, but rather too anxious about his lessons, conscientious and very solemn as a rule. I remember his mother once said to me, 'I find Joseph asks questions which I have great difficulty in answering.'

"Mrs. Chamberlain used to come and see me about her son; she was most anxious that he should do well and perform his duties faithfully. She thought much about duty, and I expected her sons to turn out well. They were a serious family, and Mrs. Chamberlain did not wish Joseph to learn or read anything light or frivolous. I remember her very well after all these years; she had a very fine face, quiet and still. I should say that Mr. Chamberlain resembled his mother in looks. I do not remember that I ever saw his father. They were rich City people, and kept much in their own set: in those days people found their friends in the circle of their own Church or Chapel."

Mr. Chamberlain remembers his old school-days perfectly. "I founded that Peace Society," he said. "It was to be a charitable society, and we had a fund of five pence half-penny to distribute, of which I contributed the largest share, for I remember my uncle gave me a fourpenny bit. The quarrel was as to what should be done with so large a sum. Eventually, after long consideration, it went to a crossing-sweeper near the school, and that was the end of the Peace Society."

Mr. Chamberlain was not the only scholar in the little school who became well known. Sir Harry Johnston, the African traveller, was also educated there.

The "Joseph Chamberlain who was being so much talked of" was not recognised by Miss Pace as her pupil until she heard from friends, who now occupy the house in which he was born, that a "gentleman had called and sent in his card, asking permission to look over the house, saying he had lived in it as a child. Then, on going into one of the rooms, he turned to the younger gentleman with him, saying, 'I suppose this is the room in which my eyes first saw the light.'"

Some years later Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain went to see Miss Pace, and the visit was naturally very interesting to her.

"Of course," she said, "I did not recognise in Mr. Chamberlain the little boy I used to teach. I was very much surprised at his youthful appearance, and to see how young Mrs. Chamberlain is too. I must say I lost my heart to Mrs. Chamberlain at once. She seemed to know all about her husband's younger days, and I thought Mr. Chamberlain remembered the neighbourhood surprisingly well. They took tea with me and stayed some time, and seemed to enjoy themselves very much. They have sent me flowers and fruit on several occasions, which I value, not only for the nice gifts, but also, and still more, for the kind thought it shows.

"I follow Mr. Chamberlain's career with great interest, and I like reading his speeches; he uses simple words, and

they are so clear, besides being amusing. And when he has to pounce down on an antagonist he does it so nicely too—just as if he enjoyed it. He must be passing through a time of great anxiety now,<sup>1</sup> and I hope it will soon be ended. So many boys have been under my care since he was my pupil, and we had so little idea of the prominent place he would fill in the nation, that we did not notice him much above his school-fellows. I often wish now that we had.”

“I think,” said Mr. Chamberlain, “my memory was better than hers. Sir Harry Johnston was, of course, after my time; but I inquired after many of the boys she had forgotten. I have somewhere still a poetry book given me by her as a prize.”

In the year 1845, when he was nine years old, the family moved to the north of London—to Highbury (after which Mr. Chamberlain’s country house is named)—and here, in Highbury Place, they remained for some twenty years, until they left London for Birmingham.

<sup>1</sup> Autumn, 1899.

## CHAPTER II

### *YOUTH AND EARLY TRAINING*

1845—1854

HISTORICAL RETROSPECT—SCHOOL AT CANONBURY—LONDON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SCHOOL—BEGINS BUSINESS—HOME LIFE AT Highbury, London.

NOWADAYS a prosperous City man, especially when he also happens to be member of a rich City Company, is popularly supposed to be a staunch Conservative. But Mr. Chamberlain's father was, both by birth and training, an ardent Liberal; and, though taking no active part in politics, he was strongly urged by the Nonconforming instincts of his ancestry to throw in his lot with Liberals and Dissenters, and particularly with those who were trying to ameliorate the condition of the poor. As a Unitarian he was naturally keenly interested in all measures intended to remove the legal disabilities from which Dissenters had so long suffered. Only three years before the birth of his son Joseph (1836), Quakers and Separatists had for the first time been allowed to affirm on entering the House of Commons; while not till three years later did Dissenters obtain the right to celebrate, though not without the presence of the Registrar, their marriages in their own chapels.

Following the first Reform Bill came a period of three years of earnest work, when slaves in British colonies were emancipated, the first Grant in aid of Education was given, children's labour in factories was regulated, and, not least, the Municipal Corporations Act was passed—all before Queen Victoria came to the throne. Even

a child of tender age must have been impressed with the excitement of the time and of immediately succeeding years and have listened eagerly to stories of the wonderful events that were taking place almost daily. Within eight years South Australia was colonised, New Zealand declared a British Colony, Natal annexed, Aden annexed, Hong Kong ceded to Britain, Scinde annexed, Canada pacified, Cabul reoccupied (after the massacre of the Khyber Pass), and the Orange River State declared a British Colony (only six years later to be made over to the Dutch as the Orange Free State). The China War, the Afghan War, and the Sikh War, with a running accompaniment of Kaffir wars, following hard on each other, also occupied public attention.

In those days London offered hospitality to all sorts and conditions of men. It was a City of Refuge for all, whether ruler or rebel. Louis Philippe, Louis Napoleon, Metternich, and Mazzini within a few years gratefully accepted its hospitality.

The reduction of the Newspaper Stamp Duty (1836) and the establishment of Penny Postage (1840) enabled news to be circulated far more widely, and thus public opinion became a greater power than before. The extension of the railway system, also, and the consequent increase of communication between all parts of the country, both by rail and letter, enormously increased the facilities for political agitation and combination.

Of this increased facility Bright and Cobden made the fullest use in the fight for the Repeal of the Corn Laws ; and while one future member for Birmingham was in the forefront of the battle, another, destined to be his comrade in many a future conflict, was founding a Peace Society at school and poring over " Little Arthur's History of England."

When, in 1845, the Chamberlain family moved to the north of London, Joseph was sent to a school in Canonbury Square, where he remained until the age of fourteen.

School at  
Canonbury.  
1845-1850.

Mr. Chamberlain's recollection of this school is still vivid.



CAMBERWELL GROVE, BIRTHPLACE OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

Specially taken for this book.





"The Rev. Arthur Johnson, the head master, was a clergyman of the Church of England: he was one of the handsomest men I have ever seen," said Mr. Chamberlain, "an excellent teacher, and one to whom I owe much; he was a man of remarkable power and influence. When, a few years ago, I went to see my old home at Highbury, I called on his widow, who was still living in the neighbourhood."

At this school the boy made good use of his opportunities, and at the age of fourteen Mr. Johnson was obliged to tell Mr. Chamberlain, senior, that his son knew as much mathematics as his master did, and that it was high time he went elsewhere.

Joseph was accordingly entered as a pupil at University College School in 1850. Here he found himself one of a strong Unitarian contingent: the names of Kenrick, Martineau, Nettlefold, Preston, Harben, all representing families connected with the Chamberlains, are in the school register. Some also of the masters were Unitarians, but the teaching of the school was absolutely unsectarian. This school has (says Mr. Temple Orme, the school historian)—

London  
University  
College  
School  
1850—1852.

"since 1830 carried on its mission of imparting a liberal education to boys without interfering with the prerogative of their parents, and has conferred inestimable benefits upon Conformists and Nonconformists of all descriptions, at a time when every considerable educational institution was closed to the families of independent thinkers. Had it been richly endowed, it might perhaps have done even greater work than it did."

It must not be forgotten that at that period the older universities were still closed to Dissenters, while London University opened her doors to them. It was therefore natural that Nonconforming parents should select the school connected with the more liberal University.

The head master, at the time Joseph Chamberlain and his brothers Richard and Arthur joined the school, was



Tom Hood (son of the poet), but Joseph Chamberlain does not appear to have contributed anything to it. Among the schoolfellows who became well known in later years, were Mr. Justice Charles, the Bishop of Toronto, the Right Hon. J. W. Mellor, Talfourd Ely, the Greek scholar, and Sir Michael Foster, the physiologist, President of the British Association in 1889, and M.P. for London University. Mr. Gully, the Speaker, and John Morley entered the school the one just before and the other just after Chamberlain's time. John Morley, for many years one of his most intimate friends, did not make his acquaintance till 1873.

After leaving University College School, Joseph Chamberlain found in French and English history and literature, and in the French language, absorbing studies. Mr. Chamberlain speaks and writes French fluently, and is one of those public speakers who need not fear to use a French quotation.

As a Dissenter, University life was denied him. Some call it the wider life, others think it tends to a limitation of sympathy and a habit of looking at life more from the point of view of the theorist than from that of the practical man. However that may be, Mr. Chamberlain appreciates a University training, and sent his eldest son to Cambridge.

The time Mr. Chamberlain might have spent at college was employed among the workmen in his father's house of business in Milk Street, E.C. As was then the custom in learning a trade, Joseph Chamberlain worked beside the men, and was initiated into both the "mysterie of the cordwaining" and the intricacies of the counting-house. Shoemakers, like tailors, are proverbially strong politicians, mostly of the Radical or Socialist type. During the two years which he spent among them he learned much of workmen's politics that was afterwards of service to him when he began to study legislative questions from their point of view. It is said that John Bright's interest in politics was first aroused by one of his father's mill hands, who inspired

Bright with his own enthusiasm during the election contest between Orator Hunt and Mr. Stanley (afterwards Lord Derby).

One of the events of this time which Mr. Chamberlain remembers most vividly is the death of the Duke of Wellington, and the great pageant of the lying in state at St. Paul's; he also remembers the death of Sir Robert Peel two years earlier. More cheerful recollections are connected with the great Exhibition of 1851, and the days spent at the Polytechnic Institution, which was then a novelty and immensely popular.

The greatest pleasure of the holidays used to be a long day at the Polytechnic. There were lectures every half-hour, some literary, but more scientific. The latter were Joseph Chamberlain's favourites, particularly those on chemistry and electricity, illustrated with beautiful experiments. The boy used to amuse himself with experiments in chemistry on his own account. Besides the lectures, there were other delights—new inventions were exhibited, such as the precursor of the Maxim gun; while Pepper's Ghost and other scientific amusements were provided. Not the least of the attractions was the diving-bell, and Joseph and his friends would often persuade the man in charge to let them go down in it.

It was a very happy home life at Highbury. The bond of affection between the members of the family was unusually strong. Mrs. Chamberlain, a sweet and lovable woman, exercised a powerful influence over her children.

"Her husband," says one of his nephews, "was a rather sedate man, precise in manner, who had been very strictly brought up, and he was delighted that his children were freer in thought and respected him without any fear. He did not enter much into public life, but still took an interest in the affairs of the time. He was very much attached to all the members of his family, including his nephews and nieces, and was anxious to promote their welfare. We had the greatest respect for him and for my aunt."

It was at Highbury that Joseph Chamberlain developed a taste for amateur theatricals. He was accounted a capital actor by his friends, and used to get up charades very cleverly. Quite early he wrote a one-act piece, called "Who's Who," in which he performed the part of a Frenchman with great spirit.

There was much coming and going at home, for the family had many relatives in prosperous circumstances, with whom they interchanged visits; and occasionally they went to Deal or Margate for the holidays, though "change of air" was not thought at all necessary in those days for people in normal health.

But Joseph Chamberlain's business life was not to be spent in London, for after only two years training here, his father sent him to Birmingham to join his cousin Joseph Nettlefold in the screw trade.

The contrast between this bright home life and solitary life in rooms in Birmingham was very great; but through his connection with the Nettlefolds, and by reason of belonging to the Unitarians, a very numerous body in Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain soon found friends in his new surroundings.



**Book II**  
**LIFE IN BIRMINGHAM**  
*COMMERCIAL AND MUNICIPAL LIFE*  
1854—1876





## CHAPTER III

### *BIRMINGHAM FIFTY YEARS AGO*

EARLY DAYS IN BIRMINGHAM—GROWTH OF THE CITY—BIRMINGHAM  
POLITICAL UNION AND ITS FOUNDER, ATWOOD—REFORM AGITA-  
TION OF 1832—ATWOOD AND SCHOLEFIELD, THE FIRST MEMBERS  
—BIRMINGHAM IS MADE A CORPORATION—ITS SOCIAL LIFE—  
BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLAND INSTITUTE—MUSICAL FESTIVALS—  
GAOL SCANDALS—LOYALTY OF THE TOWN—VISIT OF PRINCESS  
VICTORIA.

**B**IRMINGHAM in 1850 was so unlike what it is to-  
day that it is difficult to realise the kind of place  
to which Joseph Chamberlain, a youth of eighteen, went  
in 1854; and some slight sketch of the town, its  
Early Days in Birmingham. previous history and its characteristics, is neces-  
sary to show the influences, political and social,  
which made it at that time so interesting, and its citizens  
so important a factor in the political situation.

From very early days Birmingham had been a favourite  
place of residence for Dissenters. One reason of this is  
said to be that it was not a Borough. By the Five Mile  
Act of 1665, Dissenting ministers might not settle within  
five miles of any Corporation. But to Birmingham they  
might come, and they did come: where the minister is,  
the congregation will be found also; and the number of  
Quakers and Unitarians who settled there was very con-  
siderable. The Dissenters as a whole, in spite of their  
disabilities, were an influential and wealthy body of men,  
deservedly respected for their public spirit, industry, and

regard for law, and their willingness to welcome every form of commercial, scientific, and literary progress.

It is only necessary to mention the names of Dr. Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen ; James Watt, the perfecter of the steam engine, and of his friend and partner, Matthew Boulton, a native of Birmingham, who first used gas as an illuminant ; William Hutton, the bookseller and historian ; John Ash and Sands Cox, founders of the General Hospital and Birmingham School of Medicine ; the philanthropic Quaker, Joseph Sturge ; Charles Lloyd, the friend of Lamb and Coleridge ; the Reformers Thomas Atwood, George Edmonds, William Scholefield, to prove that even at the beginning of the nineteenth century Birmingham could boast of some remarkable men whose influence on the scientific, commercial, and political history of the country, extended far beyond the town in which they lived.

The growth of the city was always remarkably rapid.

**Growth of the City.** Some doggerel verses, published in 1828, complain of the changes then taking place.

"I CAN'T FIND BRUMMAGEM.

" Full twenty years and more are past  
 Since I left Brummagem ;  
 But I set out for home at last,  
 To good old Brummagem.  
 But every place is altered so,  
 There's hardly a single place I know ;  
 And it fills my heart with grief and woe,  
 For I can't find Brummagem.

" But 'mongst the changes we have got  
 In good old Brummagem,  
 They've made a Market of the Mott<sup>1</sup>  
 To sell the pigs in Brummagem.  
 But what has brought us most ill-luck,  
 They've filled up poor old Pudding Brook,  
 Where in the mud I've often stuck,  
 Catching jackbanils<sup>2</sup> near Brummagem.

<sup>1</sup> Moat.

<sup>2</sup> Sticklebacks.

"I remember one John Growse,  
A buckle-maker in Brummagem;  
He built himself a country house,  
To be out of the smoke of Brummagem.  
But though John's country house stands still,  
The town itself has walked up hill,  
Now he lives beside of a smoky mill  
In the middle of the streets of Brummagem."

The merchants and gentry then lived in the centre of the town, and trees and gardens were still to be seen attached to the houses in the principal streets, though the condition of the poorer parts of the town was very bad. These were times of terrible distress, and the belief that the ever-recurring commercial depression was caused by political abuses capable of remedy, was the real reason of many of the outbreaks of violence which gave Birmingham so bad a name. It had the reputation of being riotous, Radical, revolutionary, and to some extent deserved its fame.

Yet mingled with all its political vehemence was a strain of practical benevolence. Hospitals were well supported; there was at the beginning of the century (1815) a Deaf and Dumb Institution in Edgbaston, besides various charities for the aged poor.

Freeth, a curious old poet of the coffee-house (who died in 1808), boasted that "Birmingham town and Birmingham men were the best in the world."

"While friendship I boast of and truth is my guide,  
Of Birmingham's welfare to sing is my pride;  
Nor is there a town, if we search the land o'er,  
That pays a more decent regard to the poor."

Of its political importance he was equally sensible.

"The free sons of trade, by Unity swayed,  
Display such a powerful connection,  
When contests arise, 'tis the Birmingham boys  
That always can *crown an election*."

Politics were at once the business and the pleasure of the

town. The year 1832 showed what the Birmingham agitation for Reform was worth. It at least impressed the Iron Duke, and convinced him that his soldiers could not be trusted to coerce the people.

The beginning of the immense political organisation of which Birmingham soon became the centre, was very **Birmingham** humble. On December 14th, 1829, in a time of **Political** great distress for the poorer classes "when hundreds **Union.** of the inhabitants were starving by their fireless **December,** hearths," Mr. Atwood, with fourteen other gentlemen, met at **1829.** the Royal Hotel. They were called together by a circular signed by six tradesmen. This little meeting then founded "The Political Union for the Protection of Public Rights."

Thereupon two hundred "respectable inhabitants" convened a meeting to consider the formation of a "General Political Union between the middle and lower classes," from professional men to artisans.

Mr. Atwood expressed the sentiments of all the truest of Birmingham reformers when he said that this organisation was merely a means to an end—the legislative machinery by means of which greater comfort was to be secured to the working classes, and the terrible distress then prevalent relieved.

"I have paid great attention to the causes of this distress for the last twenty years; I have paid greater attention to it than to any other public subject, considering that it was a question of the highest importance, in comparison with which Parliamentary Reform itself is inferior. Although a radical reformer, I want to see prosperity in the country, in order that we may have good ground under our feet, and then I will go hand in hand with my townsmen, if they please, in endeavouring to obtain a radical reform."

**Objects of the** The OBJECTS of the Union were summed up **Union.** in the eighth clause of its constitution:—

"To collect and organise the peaceful expression of public opinion, so as to bring it to act upon the legislative functions in a just, legal, and effectual way."

Thus it was that when Feargus O'Connor, the Chartist, in the presence of the leader of the Political Union, proclaimed the doctrine that the people were justified in obtaining their rights by force, George Edmonds, one of its founders and most earnest supporters, exclaimed,—

“No! by the great God, the honest men of Birmingham will never stand it.”

The duties of the members of the Union were clearly defined :—

“First, to be good, faithful, and loyal subjects of the King, and to obey the laws. To bear in mind that the strength of our Society consists in the Peace, Order, Unity, and Legality of our proceedings, and to consider all persons as enemies who shall in any way invite or promote violence, discord, or division, or any illegal or doubtful measures.

“Never to forget that by the exercise of the above qualities we shall produce the display of an immense organised moral power which cannot be despised or disregarded; but that if we do not keep clear of the innumerable and intricate laws which surround us, the lawyer and the soldier will break in upon us and render all our actions vain.”

There is a pathetic note about this warning. George Edmonds had already, in 1820, suffered a year's imprisonment in Warwick Gaol for “conspiring to elect and return without lawful authority Sir Charles Wolseley, Bart., as a member to represent the inhabitants of Birmingham in the Commons House of Parliament.” As chairman of a meeting which demanded Parliamentary representation he had been guilty of this strange crime. No wonder the Political Union feared lawyers.

Soldiers they had equal need to fear, for they had been used against unarmed men and women in the Peterloo massacre; and in 1832 the Scots Greys, stationed in Birmingham, were ordered to be daily and nightly booted and saddled, and with ball cartridge ready for use at a moment's notice, for it was rumoured that the men of the Birmingham Political Union were to march for London, and

Reform  
Agitation  
of 1832.

the Greys were to stop them on the road. Yet the soldiers were many of them members of the Union and friends of the citizens, and letters were found in the streets of the town written by the soldiers imploring the people to abstain from riot. "If you do nothing but make speeches," they said, "sign petitions, and go peaceably to present them, though you go in hundreds of thousands, the Greys will not prevent you."

A great meeting had been held on Newhall Hill on May 7th, 1832. The Political Unions of the Black Country—from Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire—were joined by the Birmingham men, and, nearly a quarter of a million strong all told, they met that Monday morning to demand the Reform Bill, "*the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill.*" They sang the hymn of the Unions, ending thus :—

"God is our guide! no sword we draw;  
We kindle not war's fatal fires.  
By union, justice, reason, law,  
We claim the birthright of our sires!  
And thus we raise from sea to sea  
Our sacred watchword, Liberty!"

"Before separating they registered a vow (the vast sea of faces upturned to heaven) before God, with heads reverently uncovered, uttering as with one voice the pledge :—

"In unbroken faith, through every peril and trial and privation, we devote ourselves and our children to our country's cause.'"

The perils and the trials were not far away; the warrants for the arrest of the leaders of the Union were already made out, but were unsigned. There had been no breach of the peace so far, but the news that the Peers had compelled Lord Grey to resign very nearly caused one. Work was suspended in the factories of Birmingham; the people were furious, and the rumour arose that two hundred thousand of the Union would march to London and encamp on Hampstead Heath till the Bill became law. Then were the Greys told to

prepare for action. Alexander Somerville, one of the soldiers, says :—

“Every day for months previously hundreds of people walked into the barracks to see the Greys who came to Birmingham in the latter part of 1831. On the Sunday before the meeting on Newhall Hill there were upwards of five thousand people within the gates, most of them well-dressed artisans wearing ribbons of light blue on their breasts, indicating that they were members of the Political Union. Next Sunday the barrack gates were closed. No civilians were admitted. We were marched to the riding-school to prayers in the forenoon, and during the remaining part of the day, or most of it, we were employed in sharpening our swords on the grindstone. . . . The purpose of so roughening their edges was to make them inflict a ragged wound. Not since before the battle of Waterloo had the swords of the Greys undergone the same process. Old soldiers spoke of it and told the young ones. Few words were spoken. We made more noise and probably looked less solemn at prayers in the morning than we did grinding our swords.”

But the Duke of Wellington, the fiercest opponent of Reform, could not form a Ministry, and Lord Grey, upon whom the hopes of the Reformers were set, came into office again. A month later the Reform Bill became law, and before the year was out Birmingham realised its dream of being represented in Parliament. No wonder there were great rejoicings. On Christmas Eve Messrs. Atwood and Scholefield, the first Parliamentary representatives, drove round the town on an open car lined with crimson and blue silk, decorated with laurel and rosettes of ribbon, and drawn by six grey horses; and from this elevation they acknowledged the greetings of their friends as they passed along.

Birmingham, however, was not content with Parliamentary representation; it always had a lively sense of favours to come, and it now was bent on acquiring a Mayor and Corporation. The Political Union, therefore, which had

been revived in order to agitate for Municipal Reform, arranged for a demonstration in the Town Hall (1836), and demanded "an organic change in the House of Lords and a more efficient measure of Corporation Reform."

A great Reform Banquet was held shortly after the demonstration, and toasts were drunk to—

"The People, and may they never forget to vindicate their rights and fulfil their duties!"

"The Reformers of the United Kingdom, and may they never forget that Union is strength!"

"The Borough of Birmingham, and may it speedily realise the benefit of a liberal and enlightened Corporation!"

When Birmingham got its Corporation two years later (1838), it may be doubted whether it was all that had been indicated in the toast.

**Birmingham**  
**is made a**  
**Corporation.**  
**1838.**

The agitation for the first Reform Bill was succeeded by the Chartist movement and riots, which had their real origin in the hunger and misery of the people. The agitation for the Repeal of the Corn Laws (1846) not unnaturally followed, and, these being repealed, Birmingham settled down to try to obtain a second Reform Bill. High hopes were entertained of Lord John Russell's measure of 1852; but the Crimean war put aside all projects of Reform, and not until 1867 was the second Reform Bill passed.

One political association after another was founded in Birmingham, and not the least remarkable was the "Women's Political Union" of 1837. "Its members held and addressed meetings, passed resolutions, raised subscriptions, and in other ways helped on the cause of political freedom."

A "Registration Society," to look after the interests of electors on the Registers, was early formed. When, for the first time, a Conservative (Spooner) was returned for Birmingham, the Liberals were greatly disgusted and asked G. F. Muntz at the next election (1847) whether he would join with Scholefield in canvassing the electors. But he would have none of their new-fangled ways. He



declined "to coalesce with anybody" or to canvass, "never having done so, and believing such a practice is equally degrading to the constituency and to the candidate."

In spite of this refusal, the stout old man was returned at the head of the poll, and continued to sit as Member for another ten years. At Mr. Muntz's death in 1857, Bright took his place, and with his election the modern period of Birmingham politics begins. Joseph Chamberlain came to the town just three years before.

Amidst these scenes of political excitement Birmingham did not forget to interest itself in more domestic matters. Very early in the history of the town it had tried to deal with the problem of the education of the poor and the intellectual improvement of the artisan; but it is impossible here to sketch the history of all these movements. Birmingham artisans were remarkably intelligent, and the industrial exhibition which they organised in connection with the visit of the British Association (1849) was the second of its kind. Its success was so great that the Prince Consort paid a private visit to Birmingham to study it. He took copious notes, and showed the greatest interest in the articles of manufactures exhibited and in the methods employed in the organisation of the exhibition; and it is known that what he then saw led him to propose the Great Exhibition of 1851.

The working men of the town were admirers of Charles Dickens, and out of gratitude for the pleasure he had given them by his books they started a shilling testimonial, which took the form of a salver and ring; the latter Dickens wore till the day of his death. They were given to the novelist on the occasion of his visit to the town in January, 1853, when he spoke in support of the proposal to erect a Birmingham and Midland Literary and Scientific Institution, which would be of special benefit to the artisans of the town.

This scheme resulted in the foundation of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, in aid of which Dickens gave his celebrated readings the following Christmas, stipu-

lating that on one night the price of admission should be reduced to sixpence, to admit his friends the working men.

As early as 1845 it was said "that no town of its size **Musical Festivals.** in the empire spends more time and money in concerts and musical festivals than Birmingham: no small proportion of its people are amateur performers, almost all are musical critics." The Musical Festivals were a great feature in Birmingham life, and the year which saw the first performance of the "Elijah" (conducted by Mendelssohn himself) was marked by the most extraordinary enthusiasm (1846).

Birmingham was a generous contributor to charity and to popular causes. The handsome profits of its Festivals were devoted to the benefit of the General Hospital. After Louis Kossuth visited Birmingham he was presented by its citizens with something like £750, to help on his work; and the support given to Mr. Bright during the Corn Law agitation was equally liberal.

The town was, however, backward in spending money on civic improvements; its representatives on the Council had little taste for remedying abuses, and reforms which would not only cause ill-feeling but cost money were shelved indefinitely; the main object was to keep down the rates, not to improve the town. The policy inaugurated later by Mr. Chamberlain and his friends precisely reversed that of their predecessors.

There was a dark side to the life of this aspiring town. In 1853 the country was horrified by the revelation of the Birmingham Gaol Scandals, and a **Gaol Scandals 1853.** Government inquiry was demanded. A terrible indictment was formulated against the Governor. "Unsanctioned by law, repugnant to humanity, and likely to drive the prisoners to desperation," was the verdict pronounced by the Commissioners on the punishments inflicted within the gaol walls. Within four years no fewer than seventeen prisoners, men and boys, committed suicide to escape those inhuman punishments. What they were will

best be understood by reading Charles Reade's "Never Too Late to Mend."

The Factory Commissioners who visited Birmingham in 1833—when an Act was passed to regulate the labour of children in factories—found that the hours of work for even young children were commonly ten daily. Though Birmingham did not compare unfavourably, in 1850, with other large towns in the matter of educational facilities for children, there was little chance of universal education when children under ten were employed the best part of the day in workshops and factories. A large number were neither at work nor at school ; and so late as 1867, out of 18,000 children between the ages of ten and fifteen, it was estimated that only 8,000 could both read and write.

The case of illiterate adults was partially met by the establishment, in 1845, of adult morning schools by Joseph Sturge, and by the training given in night schools. Nearly every denomination did something towards providing educational facilities for both children and adults.

But to realise the state of the town when Mr. Chamberlain settled there in 1854, we must remember that there were no big elementary schools, no possibility of artisans' children entering the Free Grammar School, no Mason University College, no Free Libraries or Art Gallery, no public parks, and only one public bath. The slums were notoriously bad, and the sanitation of the town was so inefficient as to be scarcely worth mentioning.

Before concluding this short sketch of Birmingham, mention must be made of the loyalty of the town. Its combination of obstinate Radicalism with enthusiastic loyalty was remarkable. The Volunteer movement had received continuous support from its earliest days. In 1788, Freeth, the local poet, wrote:—

"Mark the lads parading yonder,  
Scarcely one turned sixteen years,  
Cursing fate because they're under  
Standard proof for Volunteers.

"Lads as tight as coats can cover,  
 Birmingham for service rears.  
 Not a town from Tweed to Dover  
 Sends the King more Volunteers."

A verse of the Warwickshire Volunteer Song may be quoted, which might again be appropriately sung in 1900.

"Here in the heart of England born,  
 In Warwick's famous shire,  
 By Shakespeare's deathless name inspired,  
 We glow with patriot fire.  
 And, thinking of our country's fame,  
 Our blood more warmly flows ;  
 For Home, for Queen, for Altar, we  
 Would meet the fiercest foes.  
 May peace for ever bless the Isle,  
 Our swords be sheathed and dry ;  
 But—should the hour of danger come—  
 We for our land would die."

Amid immense applause, Atwood, when addressing the Political Union soon after its foundation, exclaimed :—

"The very moment the King commands us, we will produce a national guard which shall be like a wall of fire around his throne. It is not too much to say that, if the King requires it, we can produce him, in this district, at his orders, within a month, two armies, each of them as numerous and as brave as that which conquered at Waterloo."

The Union inscribed on their medal "The safety of the King and people" and "God save the King !"

When the Queen, as Princess Victoria, passed with the Duchess of Kent through Birmingham, she received a welcome scarcely less enthusiastic than that accorded her when, in 1858, she came to open Aston Park. And each succeeding Royal visitor has had a gracious and loyal greeting.

## CHAPTER IV

### *COMMERCIAL LIFE*

1854—1864

MR. CHAMBERLAIN COMES TO BIRMINGHAM, 1854—THE SCREW TRADE AND HIS COMMERCIAL POLICY—ATTACK ON THIS IN 1884—THE DEFENCE—MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND HIS WORKMEN—PRIVATE LIFE—HIS UNITARIAN FRIENDS—THE EDGBASTON DEBATING SOCIETY—IN SOCIETY—HIS MARRIAGE.

**M**R. CHAMBERLAIN'S commercial life in Birmingham lasted from the year 1854 till 1874, when he retired from business as a screw manufacturer. But shortly after 1864 he began to interest himself in public work, and therefore the last ten years of his career as a business man will be included in the chapters describing his "Early Public Work."

After two years in his father's business in London he was sent to Birmingham to join his cousin, Joseph Nettlefold, in the manufacture of wood-screws (these are screws *for*, not *of*, wood).

Miss Martha Chamberlain had married Mr. Joseph Nettlefold, senior, who, in 1854, induced Joseph Chamberlain's father (his brother-in-law) to put capital into the screw business in Birmingham, in order that a patent which the firm had just acquired might be developed. Accordingly a son from each family came to Birmingham and took up the work there; and young Joseph Nettlefold (who married in Birmingham and lived at King's Heath) remained in the firm until his death. As he had no sons to succeed him, his interest in the business passed to his brother Frederick and

his nephews (sons of Mr. Edward Nettlefold, of Highgate, London). It is carried on by them under its present name of "Nettlefolds, Limited."

In 1854 there was much in the position of the screw trade to cause the firm anxiety. It might, indeed, be reorganised and take a new lease of life; or it might, like many other Birmingham trades, linger awhile, then dwindle and die.

Fortunately for Mr. Chamberlain, and, it must be owned, largely owing to his ability, the position of Nettlefold and Chamberlain improved steadily, and latterly their business grew by leaps and bounds.

In 1866 a volume was published on "The Resources, Products, and Industrial History of Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District," to which Mr. Chamberlain contributed information. He stated that Birmingham manufacturers not unfrequently worked side by side with their men, and sometimes with members of their family, in their own dwelling-house or in small premises attached to it. When the bigger men began to use steam power instead of hand labour only, such small owners could not compete with them, and, falling out of the ranks as employers, many of them obtained work as foremen and overlookers. Gradually most of the small firms disappeared as the factories became larger. But with better premises the conditions of labour became more sanitary; and with shorter hours, higher wages, and economy of labour, better work was produced; and with it came an increased demand. The screw trade developed enormously; and the larger share of it eventually fell to Nettlefold and Chamberlain, who, in 1865, produced 90,000 gross of the 130,000 gross then being turned out weekly in Birmingham. At first all had not gone well with the firm: they had secured the new patent rights for England only; but America, Germany, France, and Russia also had bought them, and for several years there was great anxiety as to how the new venture would turn out. Mr. Chamberlain followed in the extension of his business much the same policy that he

afterwards adopted at the Colonial Office to promote Imperial commerce. He turned his attention to finding new markets for trade and improving those which already existed.

From the first he showed remarkable business aptitude, uniting with the power of seeing far ahead a capacity for detail, a combination as rare as it is valuable. For instance, finding that little or no trade was done by his firm with France, he turned his attention to the cause of this want of enterprise. He found that the English weights and measures were used by the English house to describe its wares, and speedily arranged that tables drawn up according to the decimal system should be thenceforth used. This was a practical measure: but Mr. Chamberlain also deferred to the usual French customs of this trade, and had the screws put up in packets of similar size and wrapped in the same blue paper that the French merchants were accustomed to see when they bought screws from French manufacturers. Presented in this accustomed and pleasing guise, the English article soon proved its superiority, with the result that a big French trade was developed where before there had been a very small one.

"It is not interest, in particular, that governs the world," said Mr. Chamberlain at Leicester in 1900, "but sentiment." And forty-five years earlier he made up his mind that if Frenchmen preferred to have their screws wrapped in blue paper, it might be a sentimental fancy, but, nevertheless, blue paper they should have. "Always concede little things gracefully," was his motto; "always hold out for big ones firmly."

As the business began to improve the firm engaged in larger undertakings.

"They built large mills for the production of wire, also iron mills, and later embarked in the working of collieries, and at the present time employ over two thousand work-people; while it must be added to their credit that the general average of wages was raised, and the condition and character of the artisans were greatly improved."

Sixteen years after he first came to Birmingham Mr Chamberlain—

“conceived the idea of reducing the ruinous competition **Commercial** which paralysed the growth of the trade; and **Policy.** with this view he entered into negotiations with two of the largest of the competing firms, and arranged for the purchase and amalgamation of their businesses with his own firm. The almost unanimous testimony of representative men in Birmingham affirms that these transactions were conducted in the most courteous and honourable manner, that the terms obtained were generous and liberal, and that Mr. Chamberlain’s actions in this respect were both highly beneficial to those concerned with the trade and beneficial to those whose businesses were purchased.”

It may safely be said that there are very few business men who have engaged in political work, and won any glory on the political battlefield, who have not been exposed to attacks founded on slanderous reports as to the way in which they conducted their business or on some incident connected with business life. But it is also probable that among men who have become politicians as it were accidentally, without intending from the beginning of their career to enter the House of Commons, are some who, if they could have foreseen their future celebrity, would have been much more careful as to how they acquired their wealth.

As John Bright did not escape, it was hardly to be expected that Joseph Chamberlain would. Bright’s political opponents, during the election of 1868, circulated the slander that he had reaped a commercial advantage by the Repeal of the Corn Laws, which, by making bread cheaper, had enabled him to reduce his workpeople’s wages proportionately. On this the Liberal Association promptly wrote to Rochdale without Bright’s knowledge, and received a written declaration from a number of Bright’s workmen, signed by those who had been in his employ before the Repeal, stating that they had not had their wages in any way, directly or indirectly, reduced. This letter was read before a crowded



Town's meeting just as Bright entered the Hall, and produced a great sensation.

A correspondent in the *Daily News* of November, 1884—Mr. H. R. Grenfell—accused Mr. Chamberlain of employing himself—

“in the past vacation and on other occasions in setting class against class. He is reported (I know not how truly) to have made a large fortune in a monopoly secured by most questionable dodges, and to have realised that fortune by investing it in securities which will in future give no anxiety or labour. Who is he, then, to accuse others of enjoying an income for which he neither toils nor spins? He has clearly recognised the truth which all politicians of experience know, that in order to give yourself up to the service of the country you must be independent; and yet, with this fact clearly present to his mind, he never rises on a platform before a packed audience without flinging mud on those who, like himself, are able to work for their country by spending the leisure of independence on that which must always be a most laborious task.”

Further, he is described as being—

“a public man who has not as yet done one single thing (other than a Cheap Jack at a fair could do) to account for the pretensions which he and his two appendages, Mr. Collings and Mr. Schnadhorst, put forth in his name.”

A few days later appeared the following letter :

“*To the Editor of the 'Daily News.'*”

“SIR,—Two letters published in the *Daily News*, signed H. R. Grenfell, and containing reflections upon the President of the Board of Trade, have just been brought under my notice. In the first the writer says that Mr. Chamberlain is reported to have made a large fortune in a monopoly secured by most questionable dodges. In the second he states that he knows nothing about Mr. Chamberlain's affairs beyond that which has appeared in the public prints. As I

have some reason to know more, perhaps you will kindly give publicity to the following statement:—

“Up to a recent period I believed the story so industriously circulated about the way in which Mr. Chamberlain realised his wealth; and when a friend of his challenged the truth of it, I had little doubt that it could be easily verified. I was quickly, and, I need hardly say, agreeably undeceived. Having made careful inquiries both of his friends and opponents in Birmingham, I could find no foundation whatsoever for the attacks which have been made upon him as a man of business.

“I had been given to understand that copies of a threatening circular to the small screw manufacturers, whom he is supposed to have deliberately ruined, were extant and could be produced. I could not discover one.

“His firm, I learned, had always stood high amongst the people, and more especially the working men of Birmingham, for honesty and straightforward dealing, and all that could be said against it was that other firms had suffered indirectly through its success. This, I think, can hardly be imputed as blame to Mr. Chamberlain.

“For him, however, I hold no brief. His method of carrying on political controversy is not always to my taste, and I am the servant of a Church to which he is not thought to bear any goodwill.

“I write in the interests of truth.

“I am,

“R. M. GRIER (Vicar of Rugely).

“RUGELY, *November 15th* (1884).”

Mr. Grenfell thereupon withdrew the charges he had made.

“I am anxious,” he said, “to express my regret that I should have given currency to reports derogatory to Mr. Chamberlain’s character, and calculated to convey an erroneous impression as to the source of his fortune. I must also admit that in discussing his platform speeches I may have unduly depreciated his public services, which, as I have learnt, are such as to have won for him, to a high degree, the confidence of the community in which he lives.”

But the matter did not end there, for one of the firms supposed to have been unfairly treated came forward with strong testimony three days afterwards.

*"To the Editor of the 'Daily News.'*

"SIR,—Having seen in the newspapers various absurd and false statements concerning Mr. Chamberlain and the screw trade, we, as a representative firm of the screw trade in Birmingham, feel bound, in common fairness to Mr. Chamberlain, to state the simple facts of the case, and state the estimate in which Mr. Chamberlain is held by the oldest members of the trade in Birmingham in reference to the important and extensive transactions connected with his name.

"Our firm, having been established in the trade for nearly half a century, has had every opportunity of knowing the details of all those transactions and their results; and we unhesitatingly affirm that Mr. Chamberlain's actions were highly beneficial to those connected with the trade, and beneficent to those whose businesses were purchased on such liberal terms; also to those who, like ourselves, remained in the trade as well as to his own firm.

"And we affirm that Mr. Chamberlain revived that which was then a declining trade and we are pleased to offer him our thanks for what he then did, and for the successful manner in which he and his firm competed with the Continental makers. And we gladly bear testimony to Mr. Chamberlain's great abilities and the courteous and honourable manner in which he conducted those great transactions, and are pleased to state that those who, like our firm, were brought into contact with Mr. Chamberlain in reference to the purchase of their business were treated in a most liberal and honourable manner, though the negotiations did not in some cases result in completion of the purchase.

"And all reports as to threats to crush out the smaller makers are false and absurd, and must be made by persons ignorant of the facts or wilfully malicious.

"Yours truly,

"A. STOKES & Co.

"SCREW AND RIVET WORKS, GREEN STREET, BIRMINGHAM,

*"November 25th (1884)."*

Thus died the slander, killed by the "simple facts of the case."

At the age of eighteen Mr. Chamberlain took his place **Mr. Chamberlain and his Workmen.** in the offices of the firm of Nettlefold and Chamberlain, in Broad Street, where he had full opportunity to display his talent for organisation, being engaged—

"in devising plans for the adaptation of existing plant and premises to new and changing conditions. He was daily brought into contact, not only with the great business world outside, but the inner life, the daily work, the needs and aspirations of the considerable community of working men and women of whom, in common with his partners, he had charge."

He could not fail in this intercourse to learn much of the past political history of Birmingham. There were many stories of the great year of 1832, when the battle for the Reform Bill was fought, and he was destined to see for himself the second battle of 1866 and 1867 fought and won. When he came to Birmingham the country was engaged in the Crimean war, in which, as being concerned with the manufacture of guns and swords, the town was deeply interested. And though Bright's opposition to the war was not popular, yet such was the respect felt for his character that three years later he was returned unopposed as member for Birmingham. Following the Crimean war came the horrors of the Mutiny, and Mr. Chamberlain heard all these events discussed by the workmen with whom he was daily brought into contact.

He was often over at the Smethwick works, and was popular among the factory hands. His association with them did much to determine his course on the Education question and to induce him to make the welfare of the artisan one of his first objects when he obtained municipal and political power.

His early interest in his workpeople showed itself in a

very practical manner. He established a club with a night school attached, in which he taught various subjects. The most intelligent of workmen had then little chance of improving his scanty education. The Birmingham and Midland Institute was in its infancy; there were no "continuation classes," no lectures to be had on payment of a small fee. Night schools and adult Sunday schools, dependent on voluntary effort, were all he could look to for help. The adult Sunday schools of Birmingham have played an important part in the education of the town and in the creation of a bond of sympathy—the result of real respect founded on mutual knowledge—between master and man. That the schools are continued, even when a better system of education has largely obviated the necessity for them, shows that the sympathy still exists, and that there are a number both of employers and employed still anxious to learn of each other; and the most successful teachers would be the first to acknowledge that they had learnt many things from their scholars. It was customary in those days to teach elementary subjects in the Sunday school. Mr. Chamberlain usually devoted himself to history, both English and French, and to English literature.

In connection with the Unitarian community to which he belonged he was an energetic worker. Besides his Sunday school and night school work, he lectured occasionally to adults, was a member of the New Meeting Sunday School Committee, and the first President of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society.

At the Debating Club in connection with his Workmen's Club he was in his element. Meetings were held at Smethwick, and Mr. Chamberlain was a constant attendant on these evenings. On one occasion a stranger who was present heard him speak. Mr. Chamberlain has always looked much younger than he really is. At that time his blue eyes, fresh complexion, and slim figure appeared those of a mere boy. His speech was not received by the worthy workmen with all the respect to which it was entitled.

"If," said Chamberlain, "I were to tell you——"

"'*I were*,' indeed," muttered an old hand seated next the stranger. "'Tought to be '*Hif I was* !' Don't know 'is grammar!"

When Mr. Chamberlain was in Philadelphia on the conclusion of his diplomatic mission to America, some of his old pupils came up and made themselves known to him. They were doing well; and in reminding him of his early work on their behalf they thanked him earnestly, and attributed a part of their success to his teaching. He has often met his old pupils, and always in pleasant and prosperous circumstances. It is commonly said that he never forgets their faces, and that whenever he meets them he inquires after their welfare and reminds them of the early days at the works or the Sunday school.

In this work Mr. Chamberlain found that his assiduous studies since leaving school were of great value. Any one who knows much of Birmingham artisans must be aware that to palm off upon them a little knowledge is a dangerous thing: no superficial teaching would content them, and if Mr. Chamberlain had to teach French he must study French. This he did to some purpose, and in a manner which shows his curiously practical character. Not content with the help he obtained from books, he employed a Frenchman to come and talk to him during breakfast each morning. One would much like to find that Frenchman and discover what were the subjects of conversation at these early lessons; hardly, we think, of the Ollendorffian character—"Has your father got an egg for his breakfast?" "No, but the son of my uncle has a fish!"

In Mr. Chamberlain's earlier speech French quotations were numerous; they did not disappear till his oratory ceased to be academic, and they were much more numerous than those from English literature—if those from American humourists be excepted.

His friends and associates when he first came to the town were naturally found among the Unitarians connected

with the Church he attended. This was the "New Meeting," a church which was afterwards sold to the Roman Catholics when the Unitarian congregation built the Church of the Messiah over the canal in Broad Street. At least three of the Chamberlain brothers have associated themselves with its Sunday school: its band, at one time conducted by Walter Chamberlain, was one of those which helped to swell the procession at the great Brookfields Reform Demonstration of 1866.

The Unitarians were then, as now, one of the wealthiest and most important sections of the citizens of Birmingham. Their liberality and their services on behalf of science, art, education, philanthropy, and, not least, of liberty, have enabled them to sustain that position, aided to some extent by their wealth, but also largely by their intellectual tastes and public spirit. They have undoubtedly furnished some of the most remarkable men of the town, beginning with Dr. Priestly; and it was among the Unitarian families of Martineau, Ryland, Russell, Mathews, Osler, Nettlefold, and Kenrick that Joseph Chamberlain found most of his friends and acquaintances. Many of them belonged to a prosperous Debating Club, which, from 1855, was known as the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society. This Joseph Chamberlain joined in November, 1854, in the first year of his residence in Birmingham; and here he met, not only Unitarians, but eager, clever men of all denominations and of varying occupations, many of whom belonged to the cultured and wealthy classes of Birmingham.

At the first meeting of the Society after his election he spoke in defence of the Protector, against the proposition—

"That the character and conduct of Oliver Cromwell do not entitle him to the admiration of posterity."

Four years later Mr. Bright was speaking in Birmingham, and a memorable debate thereupon took place, on the motion—

"That this Society strongly condemns the principles enunciated in the speeches recently made by Mr. Bright in Birmingham, and also the spirit in which those speeches were delivered."

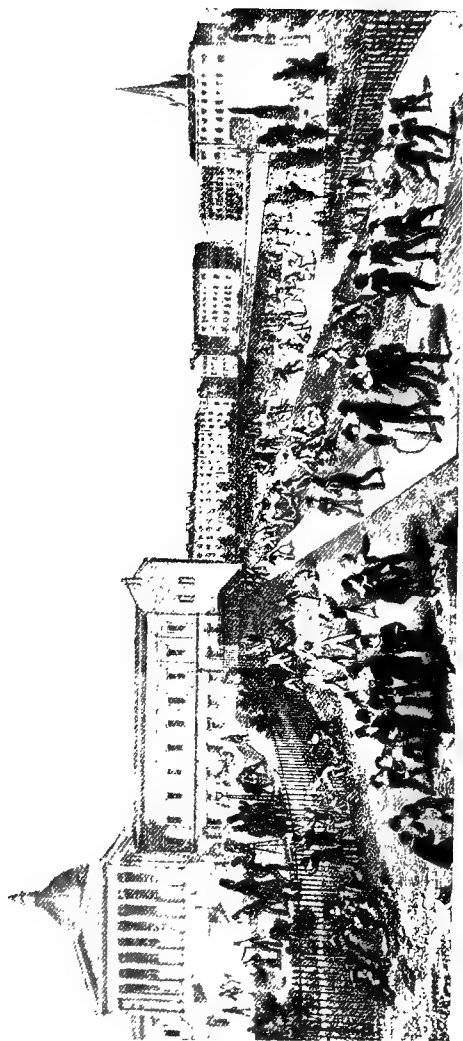
The presumption of young Joseph Chamberlain in supporting this proposition has often been commented on. It should, however, be remembered that he was then by no means alone in his opposition to Bright's foreign policy, of which he never wholly approved. The debate lasted two evenings, and Mr. Bright's critics only lost their motion by one vote. "Mr. Joseph Chamberlain," says the local paper, "in a lively and clever speech, pointed out a number of inaccuracies in Mr. Bright's speeches." He asserted that the aristocracy were by no means responsible for all the wars, as Mr. Bright had implied; that every war since 1688 had been demanded by the people; that the world was indeed a gigantic "New Inkleys" (a Birmingham slum then quite unsafe for the ordinary citizen); and that it was always necessary to be prepared for war—a proposition in support of which he quoted Kossuth, Bacon, and Cromwell.

Important as the Edgbaston Debating Society undoubtedly felt themselves to be, they did not aspire to the honour of having their deliberations noticed in Parliament. But Mr. C. B. Adderley, M.P. (now Lord Norton), shortly afterwards referred to—

"the skilled artisans in Birmingham. They had their debating clubs, and not long ago the question discussed at one of them was whether the honourable Member (Mr. Bright) really represented them in this House, the result being that, in a vote, the honourable Member had a majority of one in his favour."

This reference might be flattering in one respect, but it was not pleasing to the Society to be dubbed "skilled artisans fit to receive the Franchise." The Honorary Secretary Mr. C. E. Mathews, was accordingly instructed to write to Mr. Adderley and inform him of the true importance of the





LONDON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SCHOOL IN 1859, GOWER STREET, W.C.

From an old print kindly lent by Temple Orme, Esq.



Society, both socially and politically, as representing the opinions of men who had votes. Mr. Adderley was informed that the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society "is in no sense a working man's institution, but comprises amongst its nearly two hundred members many graduates of both Universities, physicians, surgeons, architects, lawyers, manufacturers, and tradesmen." The names and professions of the several speakers in the debate were sent to Mr. Adderley, but it is to be feared he did nothing in the House to correct the wrong impression he had given of the status of the audacious Debating Society which had criticised John Bright.

Mr. Chamberlain was Treasurer in 1858, Secretary in 1859 and 1860, Vice-President in 1861, and President in 1863 and 1896.

The references to his Debating Society speeches in the Birmingham papers are probably the first references to Mr. Chamberlain of any kind in the public prints. *Aris' Gazette* records the annual summer excursion (July, 1859), when, during the dinner at the Lyttelton Arms, Hagley, Mr. J. Chamberlain—

"gave 'The Artopsariacoluthic Members' (or followers of the loaves and fishes), explaining in a speech which elicited constant laughter and applause that the members in question were those who always attended at the annual (free) supper of the Society, but did not think it necessary to be present at the ordinary meetings."

"In a smart and brilliant speech," says Mr. T. Anderton, who was present, "he poked rare fun at the dinner-debating members; . . . he not only did this with delicious banter and pointed sarcasm, but, with an audacious touch all his own, he coupled the toast with the name of one member present.

"This brought the ruffled gentleman up on to his legs, and, smarting under Mr. Chamberlain's ironical philippics, he tried to pay back 'our young friend' for what he considered his unwarrantable impertinence. But Mr. Chamberlain was not

in the least disconcerted by the hotly expressed resentment of the offended member. With his eyeglass in his eye, he smiled with amused complacency, while his irate friend tried to pay him back, though scarcely in his own sharp, ringing coin."

Mr. C. E. Mathews, speaking in 1891, gives another sketch of Mr. Chamberlain in connection with this Society.

"In 1854 it included seventy-five members, and its meetings used to take place at the Hen and Chickens Hotel. It included amongst its members Thomas Martineau, William Kenrick, G. J. Johnson, George Dixon, Samuel Timmins, William Harris, John Thackray Bunce, William Mathews, and others, all of whom are not unknown to the Birmingham of to-day, and I had the honour of being the unworthy Honorary Secretary of that Society. . . . On November 29th I proposed—it was duly seconded and resolved unanimously—that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain be elected a member. . . . From that time he was a regular attendant at the meetings of the Society, and was a constant speaker; . . . he signalled his year of office as Secretary by urging the Lord-Lieutenant to allow the Society to form from its own ranks a company of Rifle Volunteers. I have been favoured by the Secretary of the Society with the old minutes of more than thirty years ago (1859), and in Mr. Chamberlain's handwriting I find therein the letter in which he expressed his regret that the Lord-Lieutenant, or the War Minister, or the red-tape gentleman, whoever he was, had not thought it right to comply with his offer. But though the effort failed, it showed how much the child is father to the man, and that Mr. Chamberlain even then left his mark upon any institution with which for the time he happened to be associated."

In the letter above referred to Mr. Chamberlain expressed himself with considerable vigour, assuring the Lord-Lieutenant that he had lost the services of a very fine company.

As President of the Society he delivered an address in 1862 on "Difference of Opinion," which has not been preserved among the Society's records.

His second Presidential year was 1896, when, in the course of his address on the occasion of the Jubilee of the Society, Mr. Chamberlain gave some of his early reminiscences. On that occasion Mr. Justice Wills, Sir Edwin Arnold, and other former members of the Society were unfortunately absent, but a considerable number of Mr. Chamberlain's fellow-members of 1854—1863 were present.

Jubilee  
Address,  
Eggeston  
Debating  
Society.  
1896.

"We were rather a Radical body," he said. "In our case the prevailing Liberalism of our time occasionally landed us in difficulties, since we could not always find sufficient speakers to defend the more moderate opinion; and I remember on one occasion, when we were unable to agree as to the disposal of £7 odd, which the Treasurer had unexpectedly disclosed to us, we unanimously approved of the suggestion of the Hon. Secretary (whom I see before me and whom I now know as Mr. Alderman Johnson), which was that we should buy a Tory with it! . . .

"No man who made any kind of reputation in our Society has failed to make it in after life; and there are not many citizens who have since distinguished themselves in connection with our town who did not serve an apprenticeship first in connection with our Society. . . .

"It is a great pleasure to me to go back to those times and to recall the incidents to which reference has been made. Mr. Saunders reminds me of one that I had forgotten when he spoke of the occasion on which I was asked to propose the health of 'The Silent Members,' and described me as an audacious debater who taunted those gentlemen with their silence and urged them to take a more active part in the proceedings of the Society.

"How changed the times and circumstances!

"I belong to another Debating Society. I should like to propose 'The Silent Members' there. But I am no longer audacious, and I am sure I should not taunt them with their silence.

"I can recall also another incident which you may think characteristic.

"I met a gentleman who was to be proposed as member the same night, and we were talking about what was to us

an important event. He said, 'I mean to make use of the Society—I mean to speak every night.' I said, 'I have no such idea; I think I shall be a silent member and never open my mouth.' That gentleman never spoke. I spoke the first night, and I believe I spoke on a good number of occasions afterwards.

"I say the incident is characteristic because it shows even in those early days I was an inconsistent person. But I owe a great deal to the Society, and I am delighted to know that it is as prosperous as when I left it. I am touched with the kindness with which I have been received. . . . Although since the times of which we have been speaking I have been engaged in large affairs and been interested in many subjects, it is quite true, as my friend Mr. Bunce has said, that my affection is always with Birmingham; and the life of this Society is associated with the life of Birmingham during the last fifty years. You cannot separate the one from the other. The Society is, I think I may say, peculiar to those who have made Birmingham what it is—the most independent, the most original of cities of the Empire. . . .

"... I am a believer in the uses and advantages of Debating Societies: there friendships may be cemented and sympathy created. . . . And I am convinced they tend to promote a spirit of inquiry, widen the bounds of knowledge, quicken and broaden the intellectual activity, and cultivate that gift of clear speaking which is in our democratic and representative system a necessary force and a potent influence for progress. . . .

"I am content to take the etymological definition of eloquence: 'speaking out'—speaking plainly, simply, fully, forcibly. And that is within the reach of any man of ordinary ability who will take the trouble to acquire the art."

Considerable attention has been given in this chapter to Mr. Chamberlain's connection with the Debating Society, because it was a very important factor in his political education and had no little influence on his political career. Speech always has been with Mr. Chamberlain a weapon of tremendous power, and in those debates he learned to obtain a mastery over his weapon equal to that of the

foremost statesman of his time. Had he been an ineffective speaker or an unready debater, it is doubtful if his other gifts of administration and organisation would have given him his present position.

At first Mr. Chamberlain learned his speeches by heart, and somewhat painfully: his delivery, though always clear, was at first laboured. The impression he made is graphically described by a member of the Society:—<sup>1</sup>

“It was impossible not to be interested, edified, and often amused by the intelligence, point, and smartness of his speech. At the same time there was, especially in the earlier days of his career, a certain setness and formality of style that suggested that his speeches were anything but the inspiration of the moment, but had been made beforehand and were being read off—the result of painstaking study, care, and elaboration. . . .

“One incident that came under my notice certainly went far to corroborate this view. I refer to the occasion of a little semi-public dinner at which Mr. Chamberlain was put down to propose a certain toast. He proceeded for a time in his usually happy, characteristic manner, when all at once he came to a full stop! We all looked up, and he looked down, embarrassed and confused. He apparently had lost the thread of the discourse he had so carefully woven; he could not pick up the dropped stitches; and if I remember rightly, he sat down, his speech not safely delivered. . . .

“He was a man to inspire admiration and confidence. There was always a promptness and ‘all thereness’ in his nature, with a decided touch of self-reliance, and I may even say audacity. In fact, without intending any reflection upon him, he might perhaps appropriately take as his motto, ‘*L’audace, l’audace, toujours de l’audace.*’”

In spite of this audacity, or perhaps in consequence of it, Joseph Chamberlain was very popular in Edgbaston society at this time. He has been described as full of fun and high spirits, the life and soul of any party, and socially invaluable as a good dancing man and capital amateur actor, who could on occasion furnish his own pieces.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. T. Anderton (*Midland Counties' Herald*).

In 1854 he settled down in rooms in Frederick Road, Edgbaston, which was distant about half a mile from his place of business, to which he walked daily. As a young man Mr. Chamberlain was by no means averse from exercise ; and though his business claims were too pressing to leave him very much time for sport, he was then an excellent walker and enjoyed getting out into the country. It was not long before he developed a taste for gardening, which, as most people know, remains with him to the present day ; and when he became Mayor he was fond of urging people to cultivate gardening as a hobby, as one of the most innocent and least costly that could be devised (though that form of it known as orchid-growing can hardly be termed inexpensive). Swimming, in which he was expert, was another pleasure. There was at that time by no means the rage for sport (as understood by cricket, football, and athletics) which now prevails. As we have seen, Mr. Chamberlain would have liked the glory of forming a volunteer corps out of the members of the Debating Society ; but he did not join any other corps when his own project was pronounced impossible.

Among his friends at this time was Mr. William Kenrick. He was the son of Mr. Archibald Kenrick, of the firm of Messrs. Kenrick, of West Bromwich, hollow-ware manufacturers. Both Mr. Archibald and Mr. Timothy Kenrick were generous contributors to the movement for obtaining Aston Park and grounds for Birmingham, and to the first Exhibition of the Society of Artists, the founding of the Midland Institute, the free libraries, and the Art Gallery, and to the Education League, and were ever ready to help with money and sympathy large enterprises for the benefit of the town in which they had made their home.

In 1861 Mr. Archibald Kenrick's daughter Harriet be-  
Marriage,  
1861.
 came Mr. Chamberlain's first wife. Their married life was, unhappily, very short, for Mrs. Chamberlain died shortly after the birth of her second child, Joseph Austen, in 1863.

Mr. Chamberlain then went for a time to Berrow Court



the residence of his father-in-law, in order that his little children might have the care of their aunt, Miss Kenrick. Mr. William Kenrick became Mr. Chamberlain's brother-in-law in a double sense when he married Mary, the eldest sister of the present Colonial Secretary.

From the time of his bereavement Mr. Chamberlain threw himself into public work with great earnestness. He was then only twenty-seven years of age, but was fast securing so large a business that in a short time he was able to devote himself unreservedly to the service of the town to which even then he was deeply attached.

That Mr. Chamberlain's commercial policy was successful is well known. He worked extremely hard and displayed a shrewdness, patience, and wise boldness which resulted in the accumulation of a fortune twenty years after he first began his commercial life in Birmingham ; and in 1874 he and his brothers, three of whom were in the firm retired from business.

All the time and strength he could spare from commercial affairs Mr. Chamberlain gave to the acquisition of political knowledge, and particularly of the educational needs of the working classes, which was invaluable to him in later years, and which enabled him to do work which at once attracted attention. The study of Blue Books may be dull, but it may lead to a career that is far from dull.

## CHAPTER V

### *BIRMINGHAM POLITICS. BRIGHT'S INFLUENCE*

1854—1867

FIRST SPEECH IN BIRMINGHAM—CORN LAWS—FOUNDATION OF  
LIBERAL ASSOCIATION, 1865—STRUGGLE FOR REFORM BILL  
OF 1867.

“**I** HEARD all Bright’s Birmingham speeches,” said Mr. Chamberlain; “and though I did not from the first agree with his foreign policy, which was practically a ‘peace-at-any-price’ policy, I had the sincerest admiration for his efforts on behalf of all legislative reforms.”

In the art of public speaking alone it was a liberal education to have heard all Bright’s speeches; for, fine as his Parliamentary orations were, he was more at his ease in Birmingham, and there was more of his heart in his speeches to his constituents and to the large numbers of working men who had not the vote and could only give him their moral, not their actual, support. How much he valued it Bright told them in his first Birmingham speech after his unopposed election as member for that borough (1857). Owing to ill-health he was not able to visit the town until the following year, when a banquet was given in his honour in the Town Hall (October 25th, 1858).

“I am not sufficiently master of the English language to discover words which shall express what I feel towards you for the reception which you have given me to-night. I never imagined for a moment that you were prepared to endorse all my opinions or to sanction every political act with which I have been associated; but I accepted your resolution

Bright's  
First Speech  
to his  
Constituency.  
October, 1858.

in choosing me as meaning this, that you had watched over my political career, that you believed it had been an honest one, that you were satisfied I had not knowingly swerved to the right hand or to the left, that the attractions of power had not changed my course from any view of courting a fleeting popularity, and, further, that you are of opinion that the man whose political career is on a line with his conscientious convictions can never be unfaithful to his country."

These words might have been used by Joseph Chamberlain himself at the memorable meeting in 1886, when he laid before his constituency his reasons for leaving Mr. Gladstone's Government.

Bright then outlines his general policy :—

"As regarded Reform, he was entirely in sympathy with the Birmingham Reform Union in demanding, first, the Ballot, and also equal electoral districts and a greater extension of the Franchise. [The Union would have liked Universal Suffrage.]

"The present system of representation was dishonest. While in one part of the country 150,000 people were represented by 130 members of the House of Commons, in other places 200,000 people had only twenty-four members to speak for them.

"The Peers were the greatest obstacle to the passing of a satisfactory measure of Reform."

His foreign policy would not now be popular :—

"I acknowledge it to be the duty of your statesmen **Foreign Policy.** with all possible efficiency to take steps which shall preserve order within and on the confines of your kingdom. But I shall repudiate and denounce the expenditure of every shilling, the employment of every ship and of every man which has no object but intermeddling in the affairs of other countries and endeavouring to extend the boundaries of your Empire, which is already large enough to satisfy the greatest ambition, and I fear is much too large for the highest statesmanship to which any man has yet attained."

As for the colonies, Bright cared little for them. He was not singular in thinking them a drain on the mother country and a burden. None of them, he said, had paid their way except Australia, or would ever be of any commercial good to us.

This was the speech which excited the indignation of Chamberlain and other members of the Debating Society, who agreed that—

“The principles enunciated in this speech and the spirit in which those speeches were delivered are worthy of condemnation, etc.”

But with the conclusion of Bright's speech, which is rightly regarded as being one of his finest passages, Mr. Chamberlain would entirely agree. Bright is speaking to the electors, as distinct from the large class which had not yet the Franchise, thousands of whom had listened to him two nights before in the Town Hall.

“You represent,” said Bright to his constituents, “those of your great community who have a more complete education, who have on some points greater intelligence, and in whose hands reside the power and influence of the district. You can mould, you can create political power; you cannot think a good thought on this subject and communicate it to your neighbours, you cannot make these points topics of discussion in your social circles and more general meetings, without affecting sensibly and speedily the course which the Government of your country will pursue.

“May I ask you, then, to believe, as I do most devoutly, that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but that it was written as well for nations, and for nations as great as this of which we are citizens. If nations deride and reject that moral law, there is a penalty which will inevitably follow. It may not come at once, it may not come in our lifetime. But, rely upon it, the great Italian is not a poet only, but a prophet, when he says:—

‘The sword of heaven is not in haste to smite,  
Nor yet doth linger.’

"... We have the unchangeable and eternal principles of moral law to guide us, and only so far as we walk by that guidance can we be permanently a great nation or our people a happy people."

When speaking to the non-electors Mr. Bright had urged that the people should prepare their own Reform Bill. Not for a moment could they be hopeless of their great cause. And he reminded them that what they had done before they could do again, if united.

"Am I not in Birmingham, England's central capital? and do not these eyes look upon the sons of those who, not thirty years ago, shook the fabric of privilege to its base? Not a few of the strong men of that time are now white with age. They approach the confines of their mortal day. Its evening is cheered with remembrance of that great contest, and they rejoice in the freedom they have won. Shall their sons be less noble than they? Shall the fire which they kindled be extinguished with you? I see your answer in every face. You are resolved that the legacy which they bequeathed to you you will hand down in an accumulated wealth of freedom to your children. As for me, my voice is feeble. I feel sensibly and painfully that I am not what I was. I speak with diminished fire, I act with a lessened force; but, as I am, my countrymen and my constituents, I will, if you will let me, be found in your ranks in the impending struggle."

"They were great meetings in those days," said Mr. Chamberlain in referring to this speech. "The men poured into the hall black as they were from the factories; now they are much better dressed. The seats used then to be removed from the body of the hall, and the people were packed together like herrings."

Great was the disappointment when the Reform Bill of 1860, from which so much had been hoped, was abandoned. The following year Bright was again speaking in Birmingham on the urgent necessity of Reform and domestic legislation, and he pleaded with all the force of which he was capable

that the people should be permitted to enjoy that which they create. His heart, he said, bled for their sufferings. It was impossible for anyone to hear this appeal and not be touched by it, and to Mr. Chamberlain it came with great power.

The agitation in favour of Reform went on steadily year by year, till in 1865, a better means of organisation being wanted to strengthen the hands of Bright and his friends, the famous Liberal Association was formed, which Mr. Chamberlain joined. His name does not appear among the list of officers, which included Mr. Muntz as Chairman, Mr. John Jaffray (proprietor of the *Birmingham Post*) as Treasurer, Mr. George Dixon as Secretary. Five months later they had an opportunity of using their organisation in a Warwickshire election.

**Liberal Association Formed. 1865.** Mr. Gladstone introduced his Reform Bill in March, 1866, and Birmingham, as usual, proceeded to express her opinion in no unmistakable terms at a town's meeting.

Bright wrote that the Bill was an honest Bill, and he was prepared to support it. It would pass if Birmingham and other towns did their duty.

"You know what your fathers did thirty years ago, and you know the result. The men who in every speech they utter insult the working men, describing them as a multitude given up to ignorance and vice, will be the first to yield when the popular will is loudly and resolutely expressed.

"If Parliament Street, from Charing Cross to the venerable Abbey, were filled with men seeking Reform, these slanderers of their countrymen would learn to be civil if they did not learn to love freedom."

It is easy to imagine the cheers with which this letter was greeted.

About this time *Punch* published a cartoon representing John Bull, Mrs. Bull, and their dog (supposed to be the people) yawning after they had read half a line about Reform ;

and the Rev. Charles Vince, a well-known Birmingham Liberal, gravely remarked that, though John Bull and Mrs. Bull might be waked up, the Government was "strongly advised not to irritate the dog." But the "dog" was already beginning to growl.

On August 27th two hundred and fifty thousand men, **Brookfields** with the Mayor of Birmingham at their head, **Demonstra-** marched to Brookfields and listened to addresses **tion.** delivered from six platforms. Bright delivered a **August 27th,** great speech in the Town Hall in the evening at **1866.** which Joseph Chamberlain was present. It was a memorable and a magnificent meeting. Hardly had the proceedings begun when the hall was rent with cheer after cheer as the venerable Reformer, George Edmonds, came in. There was no restraining the enthusiasm of the audience as they saw before them a man who had suffered a year's imprisonment in Warwick Gaol for merely presiding at a meeting which was held to demand that Birmingham should have its own member. And there were men in the hall who also remembered 1832, and the Scots Greys rough grinding their swords in the barrack-yard.

"To-morrow," said Bright, "there will be an audience of millions throughout the whole of the United Kingdom anxious to know what has been said and done on August 27th in the great city of Birmingham."

He closed with a stirring appeal for union:—

"Stretch out your hands to your countrymen in every part of the three kingdoms and ask them to join in a great and righteous effort on behalf of freedom, which has been for so long the boast of Englishmen, but which the majority of Englishmen have never yet possessed.

"Care not for calumnies, for lies.

"Our object is to restore the British Constitution in all its fulness and all its freedom to the British people."

Parliament was not insensible of the importance of this

expression of opinion by a quarter of a million of people ; and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the organ of the cultured classes and opposed to the democracy, after describing the procession (two miles in length) and the great appeal of two hundred and fifty thousand men for a fair Reform Bill, says :—

“It is impossible for any man but the stupidest to look upon these things with anything but respect, and the idea of postponing Reform to another session is but a dull dream.”

A year later (August, 1867) the second Reform Bill became law, and in this year William Scholefield, **Second Reform Bill.** the member who had done so much to secure **August, 1867.** the first Reform Bill for Birmingham, died.

Mr. Chamberlain was now thirty-one years of age, and—

“was at that time a *persona grata*,” says Mr. C. E. Mathews, “in Birmingham society, where his kindness, his wit, and his good humour made him a universal favourite: but I well remember how we used to say that we should have to get up very early in the morning if we wanted to ‘take in Chamberlain.’ He began all too slowly to interest himself in the public work of the town. He joined the North Warwickshire Registration Society, of which I was an officer, and we attempted to grapple with the Toryism of Spooner and Newdegate.”

Only once since Birmingham sent a representative to Parliament had a Conservative (Spooner) been returned. His election was felt to be a slur on the town whose first member was Atwood, the founder of the Political Union from which sprang the celebrated Birmingham Liberal Association.

By birth a Liberal, Mr. Chamberlain’s early surroundings, his intimate association with working men, his school-days among those who still suffered disabilities as Dissenters, his sympathy with Bright’s love of the people, inevitably tended to convert his Liberalism into Radicalism. Though



he did not agree with Bright's foreign policy (he was even then something of an Imperialist), he was heart and soul with him in every measure which should lighten the lot of the labouring man and increase the dignity and power of all forms of local government, and it was in these directions that his first public services were offered.

## CHAPTER VI

### *EARLY POLITICAL WORK*

1867—1869

ELECTIONS, 1868—IRISH CHURCH DISESTABLISHMENT BILL, 1869—  
FIRST TOWN HALL SPEECH, ETC.

**I**N 1867 George Dixon, the Mayor whose name was to become so well known as President of the Birmingham Education League, was chosen to fill the vacancy caused by the death of William Scholefield. He was opposed by Sampson Lloyd, a Conservative banker ; and Mr. Chamberlain, as one of Mr. Dixon's friends, engaged in the electioneering work necessary to secure his return.

The Mayor was at the time unpopular with a section of the town in consequence of his action in suppressing the **Murphy Riots. 1867.** John Murphy, a delegate of the London Protestant Electoral Union, who demanded the use of the Town Hall in which to deliver an anti-Catholic lecture. It was refused by Mr. Dixon. Murphy's supporters then built a wooden pavilion for him in Carr's Lane, a street close to the Police Courts, Magistrates' Offices, Roman Catholic Chapel, and the Irish quarter in Park Street. Murphy's obstinacy and fanaticism amounted almost to insanity. He declared that "priests were murderers, cannibals, pick-pockets, liars !" And his audience seemed to think that he had made out a good case for each of the charges.

After he had delivered his lecture the row began. The Roman Catholics waited for their enemies as they left the

pavilion. The riot broke out on Sunday evening, continued all Monday at intervals, and a part of Tuesday. So serious did matters become that after considerable damage had been done the magistrates summoned the military, the 8th Hussars, who laid about them vigorously with the flat of the sword, while the police charged with drawn cutlasses. The Irish replied with brick-ends, tiles off the roofs, and with any missile they could pick up. Most of them were also armed with bludgeons. It was a truly magnificent row, such as Birmingham had not enjoyed for some time.

The police, having driven the Irish back into Park Street, guarded the end of it, and sustained ugly rushes from the Irish, who charged every now and again. The so-called Party of Law and Order, reinforced by all the Protestant (!) roughs of the town, marched with the police to the Irish quarter and wrecked it completely. The street was gutted, the furniture and effects thrown out into the street and burnt.

"I went down next day to see the place," said Mr. Chamberlain. "The roofs were gone, the fronts of the houses also; the remains of the fires were still to be seen."

Miserable women and children crouched by their ruined firesides while their husbands and fathers were marched off to gaol.

"I remember," said an old man to the writer, "as 'ow a man I knew were a-standin' at 'is door.

"'Go in,' says the soldiers.

"'Not I,' says 'e.

"'Go in,' they says again.

"'Not I,' says 'e. 'I'm a-standin' at my own door.'

"Then they takes and cuts 'is ear clean off. Yes, they was very strict in those days!"

In 1868 the Liberal Association was reorganised, and **Birmingham Liberal Association ("The Caucus").** Mr. Chamberlain, now thirty-two years of age, became a prominent member. This famous Association, destined to become one of the most powerful instruments the political world has ever known, was in its construction a very simple organisation.

It was intended to collect and represent all shades of Liberal opinion in the town, and to use the voting power of the constituency in the Liberal interest with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of friction. Its strength consisted in the efficient representation of all Liberals, especially of the working men, who, proud of the power directly entrusted to them, became faithful and vigorous supporters of the new organisation.

Each ward of the town elected its own committee, from which three representatives were sent to the Executive, and twenty-four to the General Committee: the latter chose the Parliamentary candidate. The General Committee, of course, included the Executive, and at first it was a small body. But as the constituency grew, so did its numbers, and it was known at different times as the "Four Hundred," the "Six Hundred," and at last as the "Two Thousand."

The Executive Committee, in addition to the three members from each ward, included at first twenty members of the Reform League; there were also the officers of the Association and twenty co-opted members. The value of these latter representatives was very great; men not on ward committees, but of weight and influence in the town, were thus included in the Executive; and any useful man, however humble, was thus eligible for service.

The most important body, however, was the Management Committee. It received suggestions and prepared the business to be submitted to the Executive. Its proceedings were unreported, and it saved time and avoided friction by ascertaining the state of feeling among the members of the Association generally. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that everything was done by this small body and free discussion stifled. Rather, indeed, might the policy of the Association towards its supporters be commended, as ample opportunity was given to everyone for discussion, and even the humblest ward member was able to make his opinions known.

The Secretary of this Association in Birmingham, who

afterwards became the Organising Chief of the Liberal Party throughout the country, was Francis Schnadhorst.

The power of the new organisation was shown by the ease with which they returned Bright, Dixon, and Muntz by a large majority in 1868, in spite of the enormous difficulties in estimating the voting power of any district, caused by the working of the Minority Clause. Just before the election Mr. Chamberlain was speaking at a Liberal Election Committee dinner. This is the first speech of his reported with any fulness.

“In Mr. Dixon’s presence I shall best consult his feelings by refraining from dwelling at any length on the personal qualities of our representatives.”

**Mr. Chamberlain’s First Speech : Dinner, June 1st, 1868.**

“As regards our senior member, I feel that with the admiration which all men have long felt for his marvellous ability, his undoubted earnestness of purpose, may now be coupled sincere approval of the statesmanship he has employed in the recent debates in the House of Commons. For my own part I must say that, while I have always appreciated the power of Mr. Bright’s oratory, I have never thought it so great as in some of his recent speeches, in which he persuaded, implored, and warned his hearers to do a tardy act of justice and to redress grievous wrong.

“In reference to our other member, I am sure I express the feelings of those present when I say that he is a worthy representative of Birmingham, and we feel he has shown himself fully equal to the responsibilities and fully justified the choice of the electors. But we are not met merely for the purpose of welcoming Mr. Dixon and expressing our entire approbation of the manner in which he discharges his duties, but also for the purpose of consolidating a portion of that local organisation by which we hope to perpetuate the Liberal representation of Birmingham.

“At the present time members for the borough and Liberal representatives are synonymous terms, and we desire that that should continue, and we are present to-night to record our earnest intention to use all legitimate means to attain that result.”

They had, said Mr. Chamberlain, to deal with two

parties, one the old-fashioned Conservative party (not used in any offensive sense of the word) and the other the new or Constitutional party or association.

"Every one of these Constitutional associations which springs up irresistibly reminds me of the patent medicine called constitutional pills. The inventor of that specific, if I may parody a term of Mr. Bright's, is not a prime minister, but only a quack. But he claims for his discovery sovereign virtues in all cases of debility; and he winds up his advocacy of his medicine by saying that such is the innocence and such the simplicity of the ingredients that a strong man in good health might take several boxes without suffering any ill effects!

"So long as the Liberal party continue in their present robust health and in their present position they will probably be able to swallow several Constitutional associations without suffering!

"But the difficulties with which we shall have to contend will arise, if at all, from within. If, therefore, we are to win the approaching contest, we must sink all personal prejudices and work together heartily and unanimously to support the members nominated by the majority, content that our principles should be represented even if all the members should not happen to be the individuals we personally would have chosen.

"I conclude by hoping that you will afford to the leaders of the Liberal party that sympathy and encouragement which will be best expressed in sending to Parliament men whose voice will be raised in accord with those leaders."

The elections were fixed for the autumn, and the candidates chosen were Bright, Dixon, and Muntz, who were opposed by Sampson Lloyd and Sebastian Evans, supported by the Liberal-Conservative and the Constitutional Associations.

The next piece of work undertaken by the Liberal Association after the elections of 1868 were won and Birmingham had returned three Liberal members in spite of the Minority Clause, was an agitation in favour of Mr. Gladstone's Irish Church Dis-establishment Bill. The Liberals, whose pronouncement in its favour had been a feature of the general election, were

Irish Church  
Bill  
Agitation.

indignant that the Peers should still delay their consent on the pretence that the question had not been sufficiently discussed.

A town's meeting was arranged for June, 1869, and Mr. Chamberlain was asked to second the resolution which pledged the town to support the Bill. His opportunity came early. His education work and electioneering speeches must have already made a considerable impression, or he would scarcely have been chosen for so big a task.

**Town's  
Meeting.  
June 15th,  
1869.**

Mr. Chamberlain was now thirty-three years of age, but had had comparatively little practice in public speaking. The first Town Hall speech is something of a test of nerves to most Birmingham men; it undoubtedly tries the voice and the speaker's power of interesting his audience. It may be taken as an axiom that a Birmingham audience will not listen to a speaker whom it cannot hear (paradox as it sounds), nor to one who is dull and uninteresting.

A stormy meeting was expected. The Liberals, conveners of the meeting, sat on the right hand of the Mayor, their opponents, the Conservatives, on his left; and the biggest guns of either party, therefore—as was frequently the custom at town's meetings in those days—were on the platform, with only the Mayor between the hostile factions. His position was not always enviable: both parties he could not please; and it was not at all difficult to displease both. Comments on his conduct were frequent and free, and often audible in the body of the hall. On this occasion it wanted a very strong man as Chairman, and Mr. Holland was certainly not that. Even Mr. J. S. Wright, with the biggest voice in Birmingham, could only be heard a few feet from the platform after the row fairly began. Supporters of both parties were densely packed in the body of the hall, and harmony was not promoted by the reading of Bright's famous letter.

"The Lords," he wrote, "are not very wise, but there is sometimes profit to the people even in their unwisdom.

If they should delay the passing of the Irish Church Bill for three months, they will stimulate discussion on an important question, which, but for their infatuation, might have slumbered for many years. . . .

"Instead of doing a little childish tinkering about life peerages, it would be well if the Peers could bring themselves on a line with the opinions and necessities of our day. In harmony with the nation they may go on for a long time, but, throwing themselves athwart its course, they may meet with accidents not pleasant for them to think of. . . ."

Mr. Chamberlain was put up to second the resolution which declared that the Bill, having passed the  
**First Town**  
**Hall Speech,**  
**June 15th,**  
**1869.** House of Commons by large majorities, ought to become law, in accordance with the national will as declared at the late general election.

He had no easy task. The proposer had been constantly interrupted, and Mr. Chamberlain spoke amid a perfect storm of cheers, counter-cheers, and interruptions. He persevered, however, and was heard to the end.

"It is only just," he said, "that those who have to discuss the Bill should have full opportunity of judging what is the national will on this question. When, however, they are in full possession of the conclusion to which the great majority of their fellow-countrymen have come, if they should see fit in contradiction to those conclusions to try again at this time—and it will be a final attempt—to stem the tide of popular opinion, the people of Birmingham will have to consider in the next great meeting within these walls whether an institution which again blocks the way to progress is entitled to their continuous respect."

"It was scarcely likely that they would sit tamely by and see their efforts frustrated by the obstinacy or bigotry of one hundred or two hundred persons, however highly placed they might be. The majority in the Commons of one hundred and fourteen represented the wishes of six million people. The sixty Peers opposed to them in the Lords represented three  
**Peers still**  
**hesitating.** things. Some of them represented the oppression of feudal lords in times gone by, when people were expected to be grateful for being ruled by the aristocracy.



In the second place, some of them represented the great wealth acquired by the possession of land in the vicinity of large towns—*e.g.* Manchester and Birmingham—which land enriched its proprietors without care or labour on their part. And, lastly, they represented, and very imperfectly too in many cases, the brains, the intelligence, and the acquirements of ancestors long since dead, who unfortunately had been unable to transmit to their descendants the talents by which they had risen. It was of such men as these that the greatest member of the House of Lords who ever sat in that body—Lord Bacon—related that it was customary to say in his time that they were like potatoes—the best part was underground.

“One might respect the Peerage very much and have an esteem for certain members of it; but when it came to estimating the opinion of one unknown nobleman as equivalent to the opinion of hundreds of thousands of his fellow-subjects, it was an estimate impossible for the people to hold while they retained any vestige of self-respect.

“It was impossible that the House of Lords should not see in the history of the last few months proof that the House of Commons was in accord with the people.

“It reminds me of an anecdote of a farmer and his barometer. It was somewhat out of order, and it perpetually stood at ‘Set Fair,’ though it rained incessantly for three days. But then even the patience of the farmer was exhausted, and he took the barometer and beat it against the steps of his house, and said to it, ‘Now won’t you believe your own eyes?’”

“All over the country the people had approved Mr. Gladstone’s Irish policy; yet the Peers were waiting, and their Conservative friends professed themselves dissatisfied.

“In the words of that great statesman Mr. Gladstone, after the time was come and the case was proved action was still to be deferred, though in this case justice deferred was justice denied.

“I venture to hope that the effect of this and similar meetings will be that the House of Lords will be advised in time, will take counsel of the most intelligent and most able of the Tory Peers, and avert, for this time at least, the spectacle of a conflict between the peers and people.”

This was undoubtedly a good fighting speech and roused

the audience. The case for the Bill had been decided long ago; the only point at issue was the true feeling of the people.

The Conservatives (who had held a very pretty little meeting a few days before all to themselves) that evening were bent on demonstrating that feeling in Birmingham was not altogether in favour of the Bill. The two late Conservative candidates, Lloyd and Sebastian Evans, were to speak next. The year before, when the result of the election had been declared at the hustings, as soon as the figures became known, cards edged with black borders had been distributed among the crowds, inscribed :—

*Sacred to the Memory of*

SAMPSON S. LLOYD and SEBASTIAN  
EVANS, LL.D.,

who departed their political life on Tuesday, November 17th, 1868, having fallen victims to that dread disease Public Opinion, accelerated by the action of the "Vote-as-you're-told Committee." They were interred at the hustings, Town Hall, November 18th, amid the woful lamentations of their chapfallen supporters.

They were, however, by no means politically dead, and Sebastian Evans became something too vigorous even for a Birmingham town's meeting. The Liberal speakers, finding after an hour and a half that Mr. Lloyd could not obtain a hearing and that the Mayor could not prevail upon the people to listen to him even for a moment, becoming seriously alarmed for the peace of the meeting, interposed and tried to induce Mr. Lloyd to sit down. As he continued to

declare his intention of vindicating his rights, the Mayor told him he had been doing nothing else for an hour and a half. At last Mr. J. S. Wright, one of the Liberal Association officials, a man with a huge voice, finding even *he* could make no impression on the uproar, began to write on a piece of paper a proposal that the meeting should vote as to whether Mr. Lloyd should be heard. This infuriated the Conservatives. Sebastian Evans left his seat, sprang forward, seized and tore up the papers lying before the Mayor on his desk. The uproar on the platform became as furious as in the body of the hall, and the helpless Mayor was overwhelmed. Mr. J. S. Wright then made another attempt to ascertain the will of the meeting. He ordered a blackboard to be brought in and proceeded to write the question whether Mr. Lloyd be heard or not for the people to vote upon.

The Conservatives now lost all self-control. They made for the blackboard and mayoral chair; the Mayor was thrust out of it, fists were shaken in his face, and the police had to surround him to prevent actual violence. Sebastian Evans was told to leave the hall and refused. Amidst free fights and a hurricane of noise the resolution was put and carried. Mr. Chamberlain was a spectator of the whole disgraceful scene.

Thus did he make his entry upon the political stage as represented by the platform of the Birmingham Town Hall, at one of the stormiest meetings ever held in that stormy town.

## CHAPTER VII

### *THE NATIONAL EDUCATION LEAGUE AND THE BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL BOARD*

1867—1873

FOUNDATION OF THE BIRMINGHAM EDUCATION SOCIETY, 1867,  
AND THE NATIONAL EDUCATION LEAGUE, 1869—SPEECH AT THE  
EDUCATION CONFERENCE—"PUNCH ON THE LEAGUE"—POLI-  
TICAL WORK IN CONNECTION WITH FORSTER'S EDUCATION BILL  
OF 1870—BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL BOARD, 1873-6.

"**I**F," said Mr. Jesse Collings, one day, as he walked through the town with Mr. George Dixon, "we could have an Education Society on the right lines, the very stones in the street would rise up and join us."

Not long afterwards the Birmingham Education Society was founded at a private meeting held at Mr. Dixon's house in Edgbaston. Ministers and clergymen of every denomination attended, together with most of the representative men of the town who were interested in education. Dr. Temple (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury) came over from Rugby, where he was Head Master. Mr. Capel, H.M. Inspector of Schools, **Birmingham Education Society.** **February 13th, 1867.** attended and gave statistics showing the lamentable lack of education in the town for the children of the poor, and also the numbers of children neither at school nor at work; these were said to average forty per cent.

Mr. Chamberlain's name appears among the list of those who were present at the preliminary meeting. It was decided to form the Society and to collect funds to carry forward the work of providing more school accommodation and of

paying school fees for children who, through lack of school pence, were deprived of education.

The meeting was unanimously in favour of obtaining power to levy local rates in aid of education; but there was not unanimity as to the desirability of demanding compulsory or free education.

The first use made of the money subscribed by the Society was in paying the fees of a great number of children—something like six thousand fees were paid (up to March, 1868) during the first year's work; but the children constantly drifted away from school and changed from one school to another, and the payments were ineffectual to remedy the evil. It was felt that the Society's efforts were being wasted for want of some system of compulsory education.

The visiting undertaken by the Society was a most valuable contribution to the cause of education. They systematically visited over forty-five thousand children and most of the poorer streets of the town, seven hundred and fifty-four in number, and thus accumulated a mass of information.

The National Education League was the outcome of the Birmingham Education Society. No public meeting to inaugurate it was held, but a circular setting forth the objects of the League was sent out, asking support from prominent educationalists; and by the time the first Conference of the National Education League met in October, 1869, over two thousand five hundred "persons of influence, including forty members of the House of Commons and between three and four hundred ministers of religion," had already joined. Its object was "The establishment of a system which shall secure the education of every child in England and Wales."

The League intended to agitate for the following practical objects also :—

"To provide sufficient school accommodation by means of local authorities. To support and to found such schools as are necessary by means of local rates supplemented by Government Grants. Schools aided by local rates must be under the management of local authorities subject to

National  
Education  
League.  
1869.

Government inspection and unsectarian. Such schools shall be free. Children not otherwise receiving education shall be compelled to attend school by the State or local authorities."

The League hoped that instruction would be provided—

"so accessible and so graduated that the child of the poorest artisan shall have it within his power to fit himself for any position capable of being attained by a citizen of the United Kingdom. To this work the League have set themselves with a serious conviction of its vital importance and under a sense of personal responsibility and public duty; and to this work they intend to remain constant until it is accomplished and the reproach and curse of ignorance are wiped away from the land."

The League members were willing to pay for their convictions, and in looking through an early subscription list it will be seen how generous was the support offered. Mr. Chamberlain and his father, with eight other Birmingham men—including Mr. Dixon—each gave £1,000, the Kenrick family, with whom Mr. Chamberlain was so closely connected, contributing £2,500.

It was no longer possible to ignore the League and its work. Its precursor, the Education Society, had been violently attacked by Lord Robert Montagu, a Privy Councillor and Minister of Public Instruction.

"It must not be forgotten," said Lord Robert, "that these societies were supported by the money they obtained in the way of subscriptions, and that it was not unlikely that their paid secretaries and treasurers would set to work to collect facts respecting educational destitution in large towns, which would, put together, make up most harrowing tales, calculated to induce silly women to subscribe to the funds of the societies. The truth was, no sane man could give credence to the reports of these institutions."

Lord Robert  
Montagu  
and the  
Education  
Society.

"The report," wrote Mr. Jesse Collings, the Honorary Secretary, in his reply, "is open to any amount of fair criticism; but your Lordship's remarks seem not to have

been founded on any examinations of its contents. I enclose a report of the Society, in which you will find the list of the names of the Committee."

Lord Robert's explanation did him as little credit as his original statement. He admitted that his observations "were not based on any particular knowledge of your Society," with which he was unacquainted and whose report he had never seen, "nor were they made with any special reference to it" [although he had mentioned the Birmingham Education Society by name]; but, judging from what has occurred in other cases, his Lordship deemed it "not unlikely" that the course indicated might be pursued.

"Such observations," said the Society, "are undeserving of further notice or reply."

This charge of cooked statistics invented for the benefit of paid officials, was specifically made in order to rebut the arguments Mr. Forster had drawn from the Birmingham Society's figures, at a time when Mr. Dixon, the member for Birmingham, was its President and such men as Dr. Temple, of Rugby, were among its founders and supporters.

The Birmingham Conference, held in October, 1869, first brought the League prominently before the public. Mr. Chamberlain's speech on that occasion, though not his first reported speech on this subject, was one which assured his position as a leader on the education question. It was delivered before an audience composed of scholarly and distinguished men of all creeds, including some of the most important representatives of the working classes, who had emphatically proclaiming their adhesion to the League.

**Mr. Chamberlain's Speech  
at the First  
Conference.  
October 12th,  
1869.**

"I believe," said Mr. Chamberlain, "we may say that, directly or indirectly, from eight hundred thousand to one hundred thousand working men have at these meetings in Birmingham given their support to the platform of the League. They had a personal interest in this matter. For it is not merely a question whether this country shall continue to maintain its position among the nations, or whether

To new mould the England to come !  
 Heaven's mint mark to bring out anew !  
 The brain-blind, brain-deaf, and brain-dumb  
 With new eyes, ears, and tongues to endure !

" Here's a Birmingham Union arrayed  
 For work, before which shrinks to naught  
 All her ancient trade unions essayed.  
 Of her currency doctors have taught  
 To bring words into fruitage of act,  
 Aspirations to turn into deeds,  
 To make education a fact,  
 Spite of clashing of churches and creeds.

" God-speed unto her and to all  
 Who for this work put hand to her hand.  
 Roar forges and sledge-hammers fall,—  
 When was forging or casting so grand ?  
 Showy face for mean matter till now  
 'Twas Birmingham's business to plan,  
 Her new work's to make substance of show  
 In our schools, and her metal is—*Man !*"

Mr. Chamberlain was Vice-President of the Provisional Committee of the League during its formation, and Chairman of the Executive Council when it was fully organised. The first work it undertook was to prepare a Bill, based upon the principles of the League, for introduction into the House of Commons during the next session of Parliament. But though the League prepared their own measure, they were quite ready to accept Mr. Forster's if only it embodied their principles. They wisely acknowledged that their experience of purely legislative work was small.

Great, therefore, was the disgust of the League when they found that he was proceeding upon altogether denominational lines. The distrust of him, first expressed at the Conference, was not altogether unfounded.

" I fear," said Cremer, a working man, " Mr. Forster is likely to bring in a Bill based upon the denominational system. Some people are against the programme of the

Political  
 Work  
 of the  
 League.  
 1869.





Photo by]

[Draycott.

EARLIEST KNOWN PORTRAIT OF  
MR. CHAMBERLAIN.



Photo by]

[Draycott

FROM A PHOTO OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN  
WHEN A BIRMINGHAM TOWN COUN-  
CILLOR.



Photo by]

[Draycott.

FROM A PHOTO OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN  
TAKEN DURING HIS MAYORALTY.



Photo by]

[Elliott & Fry.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN IN 1888, AT THE TIME  
OF HIS MARRIAGE TO MISS ENDICOTT.



League because a policeman must be called in to enforce it. For my part I should be very glad to see a policeman drag a child to school if I thought there was a reasonable prospect that by that means he would be saved dragging him to gaol in after years. The old do-nothing policy has passed away for ever, and has been succeeded by a determination on the part of the people to do something useful and to do it well."

Though the League was dissatisfied with Forster's Bill, "we do not," said Mr. Chamberlain at a meeting in the Town Hall (March 7th, 1870), called to discuss the Bill, "commit this meeting to a position of hostility to Her Majesty's Government. I have great faith in the fairness of the Ministry."

There were few things which made him more indignant throughout this contest than the assertion that in asking for an extension of education which should be unsectarian, the League was encouraging irreligion.

"No proposal can be justly open to such a charge which has for its sole object the material and moral advancement of the great bulk of the people, and which will maintain the great principles of religious freedom and religious equality which have made this nation what it is, and which seeks to lay far and wide those solid foundations upon which alone a worthy faith can be established."

Before Forster's Bill became law Mr. Chamberlain had **Chamberlain** attracted Bright's attention by a speech on the **Attracts** education question at a breakfast meeting held **Bright's** in connection with the League. **Attention.**

"The League," he said, "would far rather the whole measure were postponed than that half-measures should be thrust upon them which would satisfy no party, but delay the proper solution of the matter perhaps for another decade, and until it would be too late for this country to overtake the progress which more enlightened nations would make in the meantime."

When he sat down Mr. Bright turned to a member of the League and expressed his surprise and his admiration very warmly, saying that Mr. Chamberlain had certainly a career before him, and he should expect to hear more of him in the future.

After the National Education League was fairly started Mr. Chamberlain went away for a much-needed holiday. At Ilfracombe he received a letter asking him to stand as Councillor for St. Paul's Ward in the approaching Municipal election. A contest was not expected.

He wrote in answer saying that he appreciated the honour offered to him, but that he so much needed rest that he could not return for the election. If, however, the burgesses were of opinion that he could serve them, he would put himself into their hands. Accordingly Mr. Chamberlain was returned unopposed as a member of the Birmingham Town Council in November, 1869.

This election was of service to Mr. Chamberlain in his educational work. He almost immediately raised the question in the Council of local aid for the schools ; and when, in 1870, he became a member of the first School Board, he was able to assist the Liberal party, both on the Board and in the Council, very materially in their protest against paying fees (levied by means of the local rates) to undenominational schools.

Despite the opposition of a large and united body of educationalists, including both Churchmen and Dissenters, Forster's Bill became law in 1870, and immediately all over the country the first school boards came into possession of their kingdom.

For the first three years Mr. Chamberlain and his friends, R. W. Dale, George Dawson, Charles Vince, George Dixon (the indefatigable President of the League), and J. S. Wright (President of the Liberal Association), were in a minority.

"By grasping improperly at the whole fifteen seats," says Mr. C. E. Mathews in a review of Mr. Chamberlain's work,

"we only got six. That mistake gave Mr. Chamberlain the opportunity of showing what could be done by the bold and fearless leader of a minority. What historic fights took place on the Board—fights in which Chamberlain, Dale, Dawson, and Vince all greatly distinguished themselves! And then, when, three years later, Joseph Chamberlain became leader of the majority and Chairman of the Board, he showed a different and even a superior kind of capacity. I had the pleasure of hearing his valedictory address, when he gave a description of the six years' work of the School Board (1876); and I remember that his partisans and his opponents alike cheered him when he stated that he left behind him the recollection of no event which he could either regret or deplore."

Another writer said :—

"There is nothing, perhaps, to compare with these debates in the archives of any other provincial majority. In tactics, in the arrangements in private council of the plan of the battle, and above all in the scheme concocted on the spur of the moment to avoid checkmate on a sudden and unexpected contingency,—in these things Chamberlain was supreme."

But it must not be supposed that he was fighting for fighting's sake. There were two great questions to be decided. Should the ratepayers' money be used to pay the fees for children who attended denominational schools, or not—and should religious teaching be given in the board schools?

In his speech at Bedford Mr. Jesse Collings had said :—

"Mr. Forster boasted that 'he would canter over the religious difficulty.' How did he do it? With a want of statesmanship never equalled. He threw down a firebrand in every district in England to stir up religious strife and bitterness. Witness Rochdale, Swansea, Birmingham, and other towns where the councils have refused to pay the precepts."

To such a pass did the dispute grow that a demand for a payment of £4,000 due to the School Board was refused

by four-fifths of the Birmingham Town Council ; and the opposition continued until a mandamus was issued by the Court of Queen's Bench. A compromise was at last effected, by which the Board undertook to make no payments from the rates to any denominational schools other than industrial. Many of the ratepayers had resolved to be distrained upon sooner than pay what they regarded as a new Church rate, levied by the obnoxious twenty-fifth clause, which produced so much bitterness. This clause empowered school boards to pay fees to denominational schools in cases of poverty.

From 1873 to 1876 the Liberal Eight were in a majority on the Board. The new members were Miss The Second School Board. 1873—1876. Sturge and Mr. Jesse Collings. The religious difficulty was got over in Birmingham at first by the creation of a Religious Education Society, which provided voluntary teachers in each denomination. But after a time voluntary effort slackened, and as a compromise the Bible was read daily without note or comment.

The discontent with Forster's Act was so great that it became a serious question whether the Leaguers should not secede from the Liberal party and run candidates of their own pledged to the repeal of the hated clause. Deputation after deputation waited upon Gladstone and Forster to explain their views, but their remonstrances obtained little attention as a rule. Mr. C. E. Mathews says :—

“ I remember on one occasion accompanying Mr. Chamberlain to Downing Street on a deputation to Mr. Gladstone and to Mr. Forster ; and the manner in which he secured the earnest and rapt attention of Mr. Gladstone, while purposely ruffling the temper of Mr. Forster, was not easily to be forgotten.

Very bitter was the indignation that Mr. Gladstone should have bribed the Irish Catholics with undenominational education while refusing it to the Nonconformists, his most loyal supporters.

Determined to make the repeal of the clause which they so much hated a party matter, the Dissenters, led by Dr. Dale and Mr. Chamberlain, swept the country from end to end, organising even a Scottish campaign, to lay their case before the people.

**Fight for  
the Repeal  
of the  
Twenty-fifth  
Clause.**

In the election of 1874 no fewer than three hundred out of four hundred and twenty-five Liberal candidates had pledged themselves to vote and to work for the repeal of the famous twenty-fifth clause. The platform of agreement was made as broad as possible, and it must not be supposed that the clerical party were unitedly the opponents of the League policy. Those of them who firmly believed that religious education was not the work of paid teachers in school hours, but the proper care of religious teachers at stated times, found they shared with their Nonconformist colleagues the opprobrious epithets by which the members of the League were known. "Infidels," "atheists," "opponents of the Bible and its teaching," were a few of them. Yet George Dixon, President of the League, was an ardent Churchman, who worked all his life with Unitarians, he was supported by a Roman Catholic priest<sup>1</sup> and by Evangelical Dissenters, for the cause of unsectarian education as opposed to denominational.

Mr. Chamberlain's position as President of the League, his unwearied efforts, his constant speeches, his bitter denunciations of the clerical and Tory party, and his fierce denials of the charges of infidelity and atheism flung at the League, brought him into a prominent position in the political world. He never lost sight of the fact that the end which the League had in view was to be obtained only by means of political agitation and political machinery. No sooner was he in the Town Council than he raised the question there. Education, like King Charles's head, crept in everywhere—into ward meetings, congratulatory dinners, at the Church

<sup>1</sup> Canon O'Sullivan, who was, it must be owned, unusually neutral on religious questions.

of the Messiah lectures, at breakfast meetings and prize distributions. At Leicester, Scarborough, Manchester, Newcastle, Stroud, Smethwick, Bradford, Leeds, Bolton, Stockport, Sheffield, he had spoken on this question before he was for the first time Mayor of Birmingham, in 1873.

And he was throughout well reported. Some men are always well served in this respect, others always ill-treated. Few speeches have been so well reported as Mr. Chamberlain's. His utterance was clear and forcible, and from the first he had the faculty of interesting his audience; he might make them furious, he might delight them, but at least they were eager to listen: few men would leave a hall when he was speaking, either then or now; fewer still would leave it without an increase either of their dislike or of their admiration of the speaker.

"I would sooner have the hate of any man than his contempt," said Mr. Chamberlain (October, 1899); and from the earliest days when he appeared on a public platform he has had his desire.



## CHAPTER VIII

### *A RADICAL LEADER*

1870—1873

FIRST CHARGE OF REPUBLICANISM—WHY MADE—FIRST ARTICLE :  
“THE LIBERAL PARTY AND ITS LEADERS”—FIRST PROGRAMME :  
“FREE CHURCH, FREE LAND, FREE LABOUR, FREE SCHOOLS”—  
CONTESTS SHEFFIELD AS AN ADVANCED LIBERAL, JANUARY, 1874.

**I**N 1869, when Mr. Chamberlain entered the Council, he had married again, and the close tie which already existed between the Chamberlain and Kenrick families was drawn closer by this marriage, for his second wife, Florence, was a daughter of Mr. Timothy Kenrick, and a cousin of his first wife.

**Second  
Marriage.  
1869.**

In the circle in which he and his wife moved were men of considerable literary and scientific attainments, many of whom were animated by a keen interest in the fortunes of the town, and in the ultimate triumph of Liberal principles.

It is true Mr. Chamberlain had not had the advantage of a University training, but its loss was largely compensated for by his wide reading, his accurate knowledge of the trend of contemporary thought and literature, and by his mastery of facts and figures bearing on political questions ; while his practical acquaintance with the actual condition of the poor in our large towns, together with his sympathetic appreciation of the miserable position of the agricultural labourer, entitled him to an attentive hearing when he wrote or spoke on the reforms which should be adopted in their interests.

Considering his surroundings and education, it would have been as unlikely as it was absurd that Mr. Chamberlain should be an agitator of the street-corner type. Yet that something of the sort was expected from him, even so late as 1874, when in his first year of Mayoralty the Prince of Wales visited Birmingham, is certain.

The almost universal assertion then was that the Mayor of Birmingham was a Republican, and, preposterous as it now seems, some apprehension was felt as to his probable behaviour in the presence of Royalty—an apprehension which deepened when it became known that the Princess was to accompany her husband. Was it possible that the adored Princess would have cause to regret her visit?

If Mr. Chamberlain, at the beginning of his municipal and political career, was a Republican, was he accepted by that Party as one of themselves and what was the nature and extent of his Republicanism? These questions can best be answered by Mr. Chamberlain himself. It was in 1870 that the first whispers of his Republican leanings were heard. On September 12th he spoke in support of a resolution expressing sympathy with the new French Republic.

On this occasion he offered to the French people his cordial congratulations on having exchanged an empire—"founded in murder, continued in fraud, and which perished in corruption,"—for a free Republic, and pointed out to those "who took so strong an objection to the idea of a Republic that there was really no practical difference between a free constitutional monarchy, such as ours, and a free Republic."

In November, 1872, Mr. Chamberlain attended an Electoral Reform Congress at St. James's Hall, London, as a delegate from the Birmingham Liberal Association, the Central Nonconformist Association (which was fighting Forster's Act), and the Birmingham Republican Club. At a later date he said:—

"There is some misapprehension attaching to the statement that I represented a Republican club. It is true I agreed

Electoral  
Reform  
Congress.  
November,  
1872.

to appear as a delegate, but I was not a member of the Club, which was of no importance in Birmingham, and their proposal that I should represent them was made without my knowledge. I was attending the Congress on behalf of the Birmingham Liberal Association."

As this Congress was concerned with Electoral Reform, the Republicans, as electors, naturally wished to be represented. Mr. Chamberlain, however, in his speech, did not touch upon the question of Republicanism, but dealt with the necessity for Redistribution and equal electoral districts, quoting figures to show the absurd working of the existing franchise law, and holding up to ridicule the anomalous representation which existed in his own district. Thus Birmingham, with a population of 343,000, was a single constituency with *three* members, which for all effective purposes could, by means of the Minority vote, be reduced to one member. The three adjoining counties, with a population of 320,000 were divided into thirteen constituencies, with *twenty* members, as against Birmingham's possible three. The Minority Clause, he said, frittered away the rights of the majority and was "an unmitigated nuisance."

Mr. Chamberlain's appearance, although in an informal manner, as the representative of a Republican club was the signal for much comment and disapproval. He availed himself of an opportunity which occurred a month later to explain his political views, when he was proposing the health of the Queen at a dinner held in St. Paul's Ward (December 6th, 1872):—

"I have been taxed with professing Republicanism. I hold, and very few intelligent men do not now hold, that the best form of Government for a free and enlightened people is that of a Republic, and that is a form of Government to which the nations of Europe are surely and not very slowly tending. But at the same time I am not at all prepared to enter into an agitation in order to upset the existing state of things, to destroy monarchy, and to change the name of the titular

Nature of  
Mr. Chamber-  
lain's Re-  
publicanism.  
1872.

ruler of this country. I do not consider that name a matter of the slightest importance. What is of real importance is the spread of a real Republican spirit among the people. The idea, to my mind, that underlies Republicanism is this: that in all cases merit should have a fair chance, that it should not be handicapped in the race by any accident of birth or privilege; that all men should have equal rights before the law, equal chances of serving their country."

He concluded by saying :—

"In honouring this toast we are honouring the popular authority, the popular will, and the supremacy of law and order which the head of the State represents, and are doing honour to the personal virtues which distinguish the lady who now occupies the throne and who has endeared herself to the hearts of her people."

"I have never," he said, in speaking a little later on this subject, "in public or in private advocated Republicanism for this country. We may be tending in that direction, but I hold that the time has not arrived yet, even if it ever arrives; and I hold also that Radicals and Liberals have quite enough practical reforms to strive after, without wasting their time in what seems to me a very remote speculation."

The truth is that in 1874, the year when speculations were rife as to the cordiality of Mr. Chamberlain's reception of the Prince of Wales, he was, in fact, not acknowledged as a Republican by the leaders of that party. In a collection of notices of "English Radical Leaders" (1875), written from the American point of view, the writer says—

"If at any time he has befriended the Republican side as a matter of justice, that is only what he has done to many other movements, the general principles and intentions of which he may or may not have approved. No doubt the Republican party would gain by having Mr. Chamberlain on their side, but it is only a matter of decency to wait till he has so declared himself. For the present they should treat him as a possible future friend. . . .

"He is a man of marked promise, though his future value is to be best estimated by the opinions of those who differ

from him. A representative man in the best sense of the well-to-do English middle class, Mr. Chamberlain has already achieved, without any fortuitous aids, a position of considerable influence. It is not too much to say that his opinions are largely instrumental in moulding the demands of advanced Radical or Liberal politics in Great Britain."

Mr. Chamberlain, then, being removed from the ranks of the Republicans, finds a place with the Radicals or advanced Liberals, to whom he very soon proposed his first programme, "Free Church, Free Land, and Free Schools."

It is generally supposed that it was first advocated in the article "The Liberal Party and its Leaders," which appeared in the *Fortnightly* (September, 1873), and created considerable sensation and much discussion. But a year before Mr. Chamberlain wrote this article he had laid before his supporters at a ward meeting, this same advanced Liberal programme, which he advised the leaders of the party to consider seriously. At this time, though in the autumn of 1872 his work on the National Education League had, of course, attracted considerable attention, he occupied the position of a provincial Town Councillor only.

An advanced Liberal, as he understood the term, was, he said, "a person who would not be debarred from going to the root of the evil by any privilege, any precedent, or any custom—

'Custom, which all mankind to slavery brings,  
That dull excuse for doing stupid things.'

If such pauperism as then existed, when one in fifteen of the population receive Poor Law relief, could be shown to be the effect of injurious legislation, it was the duty and the province of Liberalism to endeavour to remedy it. They were told the Liberal programme was exhausted. One chapter might be nearly closed, but they had a long way to go before reaching the third volume. If, however, the leaders were exhausted, it was the duty of the rank and file to press upon their attention matters of importance.

Autumn, 1872.  
Speech to  
his Ward  
Electors.

"Some time ago, it seemed to me that it would not be a bad future platform for the Liberal party if they adopted this line: 'Free Church, Free Schools, Free Land.' It seems to me that might occupy the leisure hours of the Government during the next few years, and its accomplishment would materially affect the welfare and happiness of the people—would materially increase them. I am not sanguine enough to hope that these reforms can be carried out by the House of Commons as at present constituted; but I hope the time is coming when every man in the country will have a vote in its government, and when the anomalies now existing will be swept away by adult suffrage and equal electoral districts. Then, when these little reforms are accomplished, I think it probable I may go in for examination as a very tolerable Conservative. But till that time comes I hope I may continue to call myself a Liberal, to be proud of the past which has accomplished so much, and prouder still if I may myself in any small way assist in the further triumph which that party is destined to secure."

In the end of 1873 he published the first of his *Fortnightly* articles, "The Liberal Party and its Leaders," and added to the above programme "Free Labour," which he believed would be carried before any of the other reforms.

Mr. Chamberlain's claim to be considered the champion of progressive legislation for the working classes is nowhere better exemplified than in this article.

The great majority of our people, he says, are, rightly or wrongly, possessed by a deep sense of injustice and wrong, and believe that they are the victims of class legislation directed against themselves. Consideration of their grievances has been refused by their nominal champion, the Liberal Government, which on all the great questions of the day is inarticulate or indefinite. The future programme of Liberalism must provide practical remedies for practical grievances. "We shall do no good by denying the existence of evils which we do not personally feel." The great bulk

"*Fortnightly*"  
Article.  
September,  
1873.  
"The Liberal  
Party and its  
Leaders."

of the nation could no longer be considered as savages to be repressed or as children ignorant of their true interests. "The Act of 1867 has made them participators in the labour and responsibility of government; and if they are uneasy or discontented, we have to seek with them, as well as for them, the causes and remedies of their dissatisfaction."

Here is expressed in a sentence the ultimate and legitimate end of all truly "popular government."

Four reforms were urgently needed—Free Labour, Free Land, Free Church, Free Schools.

In discussing the question of Free Labour Mr. Chamberlain asserts the right of working men "to have some voice in the conditions on which they shall give their labour." Soon both Liberals and Tories would find that the labouring classes insisted on having their claims considered. If those who viewed with alarm and disgust the growing power of trades' unions could not be brought to realise the unreasonableness of their fears, they might at least be convinced of the futility of their opposition. Capital should not be left without fair remuneration; but from the ability and fairness shown by working men in co-operative societies he had no reason to believe they would show themselves unfair or incapable of self-denial. If, however, the capitalists' only dread was "the probability that in times to come labour will insist on a larger share of the profits of trade than has hitherto been voluntarily accorded by capital, they do not deserve, and they will not obtain, much sympathy."

Free Land was needed chiefly in the interests of the agricultural labourer, and it was outlined in the article with sufficient clearness to make it a practical reform. The cheap and ready transfer of small properties, the removal of the injurious restrictions of primogeniture and entail, and the enforced recognition of the tenant's right to his unexhausted improvements, "are changes imperatively demanded, both by expediency and by justice."

A Free Church would remove a source of division, and set  
 3. Free at liberty agencies for good which were being  
 Church. wasted in fruitless conflict and competition, opening  
 the way to reforms now hampered by sectarian jealousy.

Free Schools were necessary if compulsory education was  
 4. Free to be anything but a sham; but Mr. Chamberlain  
 Schools. evidently considered the country not yet ripe for  
 the measure at this time, though it should be an integral  
 part of an advanced Liberal programme.

Mr. Chamberlain pointed out that the Liberal party would  
 not be again reunited till a new programme had been  
 elaborated which should satisfy the "just expectations of  
 the representatives of labour, as well as conciliate the Non-  
 conformists who have been driven into rebellion."

There was no lack of plain speaking or of serious  
 warning in his impeachment of the Liberal Ministry, which  
 "now confines itself to preparing Bills which are meant to  
 be withdrawn, and which pass into the limbo of unaccom-  
 plished legislation 'unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.'" Some  
 day, he predicted, we should be startled "by the abrupt  
 and possibly inconvenient accomplishment of reforms which  
 will throw into the shade the achievements of such a  
 Ministry, if we continue much longer to flaunt our wealth  
 and luxury in the face of a vast population whose  
 Impeachment homes would disgrace a barbarous country, and  
 of the who are often unable to procure the barest neces-  
 Liberal saries of life." It was useless for a Liberal  
 Leaders. Ministry to expect to retain its adherents by a policy which  
 hoped to avoid defeat by proposing nothing worthy of  
 attack. They had certainly done their best—

"Agin to impress on the poppylar mind  
 The comfort and wisdom of goin' it blind,"

but unsuccessfully. If Conservatism were organised selfish-  
 ness, of late Liberalism had been selfishness without organ-  
 isation. They had lost sight of principles in fishing for the  
 votes of their opponents. Those who set their convictions



above their party and valued principles more than persons had no alternative but to revolt. They must expect isolation and unpopularity; "but if they persevere they will not want allies and followers, and their determination will elicit sympathy and encourage imitation."

Possibly Mr. Chamberlain remembered these words when he sent in his letter of resignation to Mr. Gladstone in 1886.

It has been customary to consider that Mr. Chamberlain first attracted public attention by his achievements as Mayor of Birmingham, and it has been implied that had it not been for this work, he might probably have been lost to the world of politics or have taken a very unimportant place in it.

The foregoing account of his early political speeches and writings should dispel any such illusion. In September, 1873, when he wrote the article which attracted so much attention and which proposed a policy ultimately adopted by the Liberal party, he had not begun any of those municipal reforms on which his earliest claims to recognition are supposed to rest. He was not elected Mayor till two months later, nor was he at this time a Parliamentary candidate much less a well-known politician.

Why, therefore, was the article not ignored or contemptuously dismissed as a bold but unworthy bid for notoriety by reason of its violent attack on the Liberal party? Because Mr. Chamberlain's indictment of the Liberal party was at that time deserved, and the programme he suggested as a remedy for its political shortcomings was ultimately adopted.

The General Election of January, 1874, followed almost immediately on Mr. Chamberlain's warnings to the Liberal Leaders, and the party was, as he expected, defeated.

It was not remarkable that after the publication of this article he should receive an invitation to stand as an advanced Liberal candidate; and at Sheffield, where Mr. Mundella, an old League friend, was with him and

Mr. Roebuck against him, Mr. Chamberlain made a capital fight. He was, however, beaten by a thousand votes, fortunately for Birmingham. Had the electors of Sheffield been able to avail themselves of his services in Parliament for a year or two, it is not very likely they would have given him up to any other constituency.

That he intended to offer himself as candidate for another seat was no secret, and the *Birmingham Town Crier*, a semi-serious, semi-sarcastic journal, pokes a little fun at him on his return from Sheffield :—

#### "A MODERN ULYSSES.

"I cannot rest from canvass—I have tried. . . .  
 Much have I seen and known—meetings of wards,  
 Mass meetings, school boards, councils, caucuses—  
 Myself not silent, heard among them all. . . .  
 'Tis not too late to seek another seat;  
 For my purpose holds  
 To rise above the council and the board  
 And sit in Parliament before I die.  
 It may be I shall reach the Happy House,  
 And see the great Mundella whom I knew."

His second article, "The Next Page of the Liberal Programme," which provoked, if anything, still greater resentment and attention, was written at the close of his first year of Mayoralty (October, 1874). Thus it will be seen that Mr. Chamberlain the politician was a person to be reckoned with quite apart from Mr. Chamberlain the Mayor, who was then attracting notice of a different kind.

It is characteristic of Mr. Chamberlain that he should have begun his career by a demand for a stronger policy from his own party. He had been accused of being the inventor or proprietor of a patent "Vote-as-you're-told" electioneering machine; but, to the amazement of his opponents, he announced his arrival on the political battlefield by challenging the policy of his own leaders. The liberty he would not accord to his fellow-men he demanded for himself, said his



*Photo by]*

SOUTHBOURNE, EDCBASTON, MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S HOME BEFORE AND DURING HIS MAYORALTY.

*[Draycott.*

Specially taken (by permission) for this book.



critics. A little reflection will show the essential difference between voting as told to secure the return of a representative who can take action in the House and voting at the bidding of a Government who will not take action at all. The vote of the *many* in the constituency is to secure the return of the *one* who represents most nearly their opinions ; the vote of that member in a division is not to secure the continuance in power of his own party merely or chiefly, but to effect the legislation to which he is pledged to his constituents.

The following table of dates shows the relation between Mr. Chamberlain's municipal and political work before he entered Parliament :—

1872. Autumn.	Mr. Chamberlain at a ward meeting asks for "Free Church, Free Schools, Free Land," as the next Liberal programme.
1873. Sept.	<i>Fortnightly</i> article, "The Liberal Party and its Leaders," elaborating this programme.
Nov.	Elected Mayor of Birmingham.
1874. Jan.	General election. Stands for Sheffield ; is defeated.
"	Purchase of Gasworks proposed. Negotiations on foot and Bill prepared during following months.
May.	Proposed extension of free libraries and Art Gallery.
June.	Foundation stone of municipal buildings laid. Declaration of municipal policy.
Oct.	Second <i>Fortnightly</i> article, "The Next Page of the Liberal Programme."
Nov.	Prince of Wales's visit. Accusation of Republicanism. <i>Punch's</i> famous cartoon and verses on Mr. Chamberlain. Re-elected Mayor. Second year of work begins.

- Dec. Purchase of Waterworks proposed. Bill for purchase unanimously approved by Council, and ratepayers' meeting later.
1875. April. Waterworks Bill in progress. Mr. Chamberlain conducts case for Corporation before House of Commons.
- July. Gas and Water Bills read. Receive Royal Assent, August.
- „ Gas and Water Committee appointed.
- „ Improvement Scheme proposed ; Committee appointed.
- Nov. Finally adopted by Council.
- „ Re-elected Mayor. Third year of work begins.
1876. June. Improvement Bill before House of Commons. Royal Assent, August.
- „ Resigns Mayoralty and Chairmanship of School Board.
- „ Elected Member of Parliament for Birmingham.

## CHAPTER IX

### *"MR. MAYOR." GENERAL MUNICIPAL WORK*

THE BIRMINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL—EARLY DAYS—THE REFORMERS  
—MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S SUPPORTERS—HIS MUNICIPAL POLICY—  
COUNCIL HOUSE—THE PRINCE'S VISIT—GIFTS TO THE TOWN.

THE reputation of the Birmingham Town Council when Mr. Chamberlain joined it as Councillor (1869) was not of a kind to encourage cultivated men to take up public work for the Corporation.

“Those who remember the early days of the Council,” says Mr. Bunce in his “History of the Corporation,” “associate it with frequent discussions of a disorderly character, reckless imputations, unwise and even impossible projects of financial reform, protracted meetings, speeches of interminable length—so prolix that the Council once made a standing order restricting speeches to fifteen minutes each—and, as the consequence, the frequent retirement of valuable members, resignation of committees, neglect of public interests, and general confusion. . . .”

“The credit of the Corporation was impaired, and so many efficient members of the Council had been sickened of public life that the status of the governing body had been lowered—so much so, indeed, that with certain classes of the town, including persons who ought to have taken a higher view of the duties of citizenship, the Council became a by-word and an object of aversion, and even of professed contempt. . . .”

“But such a state of things could not last. Birmingham was becoming too important, and public opinion too well instructed, not to desire a higher method of conducting municipal business. . . .”

“One by one leading citizens came back into the Council, . . .”

and the first work they had to do was to combat the leaders of the dominant section. It was a task of real difficulty, and by no means a pleasant thing. . . . At a later period the powerful aid of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and those who were glad to acknowledge him as their leader . . . contributed to develop a new phase of municipal government. . . .

"The quality of the Council continued steadily and rapidly to improve: a higher standard of public duty was established, capable citizens recognised the obligation of taking part in the government of the town, and a series of important enterprises was entered upon, under the brilliant administration of Mr. Chamberlain, resulting in the acquisition of the gas- and water-works, the development of the Health Department, and the institution of the Improvement Scheme."

When Mr. Chamberlain joined the Council there were only three members (Messrs. Avery, Jesse Collings, and Harris) who sympathised with his ideals of municipal government; but no exertions were spared to induce capable and energetic men holding similar views to present themselves for election. He devoted himself ardently to the cause, speaking frequently in the wards and enlisting recruits for the Council. The numbers of the Reform party grew steadily, and only four years after he became a member of it a crowning effort was made. Every ward in the town was contested amid excitement which rivalled that of a General Election, and on the polling day a large crowd assembled to wait for the announcement of the results. The Reformers came in with a very large majority, and immediately elected Mr. Chamberlain as Mayor (November, 1873).

Strong as the Reformers now were in the Council, it cannot be doubted that they owed much of their success to the generous assistance they received from prominent public men outside the Council. No history of this phase of Birmingham life would be complete without a reference to the warm sympathy and the effective aid given by the Nonconformist ministers, and by some of the clergy of the Church of England, to the work of the Reformers by preaching the "Municipal Gospel," as Dr. Dale termed it.



George Dawson, who was attached to no denomination ; Dr. Dale, the Congregationalist ; Charles Vince, the Baptist ; and Dr. Crosskey, the Unitarian, were foremost in supporting the Reform party in the Council ; but the two former probably exerted the strongest influence.

Each of these men was willing to give credit to the others for their work. Dr. Dale says of Mr. Dawson :—

“ The original creation of this new spirit was, I believe, due to the late Mr. George Dawson more than to any other man. For many years he had been teaching that, unless the best and ablest men in the community were willing to serve it, new laws could not work any great reformation, and that it was the duty of those who derived their prosperity and opportunities of culture from the community to become its servants.

“ Mr. Dawson was the prophet of the new movement. But Mr. Dawson had not the kind of faculty necessary for putting faith into practice. . . .

“ This was largely done by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who began to show proof of those great powers which have since been recognised by the nation. . . . Mr. Chamberlain gave himself to the work with a contagious enthusiasm. . . . He used his social influence to add strength to the movement. He appealed in private to men of ability who cared nothing for public life, and he showed how much they might do for the town if they would go into the Council ; he insisted that what they were able to do it was their duty to do. He dreamt dreams and saw visions of what Birmingham might become, and resolved that he, for his part, would do his utmost to fulfil them. . . .

“ It now became the ambition of young men, and cultivated men, and men of high social position, to represent a ward and to become aldermen and mayors. . . .

“ The new movement was fortunate in securing from the first the able support and wise guidance of the *Birmingham Daily Post*. Its editor, Mr. Bunce, was the trusted friend and adviser of the leaders, and the intimate personal friend of the most important of them. Through the columns of the most powerful newspaper in the midland counties the new ideas about municipal life and duty were pressed on the whole community.”

Dr. Dale's zeal on behalf of the town was not surpassed by that of Mr. Chamberlain himself. The support of such a man was invaluable.

"For that fair ideal of municipal life," he said, "which for many years past we have been trying to realise, I have felt a passionate enthusiasm. . . . It has been my happiness and my pride to sustain, according to my limited measure of strength and resources, those whose powers and whose zeal have made them the leaders of this movement. They have been good enough to accept me as a comrade. I have shared their hopes; I have accepted their principles; I have watched their work with admiration; I have exulted in their triumph."

Unfortunately none of the ministers of religion were legally eligible to sit on the Council.

Mr. Chamberlain was fully sensible of the assistance he thus received, and on the occasion of his election as Member for Birmingham he paid a generous tribute to Dr. Dale's work for the town:—

"I have seen a statement that I go to Parliament as the representative of Mr. [Dr.] Dale.

"Well, if that be so, there is not a representative in the House of Commons who will have a better, wiser, or nobler constituency. But you will at least remember this—that if Dr. Dale has any influence over the fifty thousand electors of Birmingham, he owes it to his devotion to their highest interests and to his eloquent and outspoken advocacy of all that is good and great."

Mr. Chamberlain's testimony to George Dawson's work was equally emphatic:—

"It is a great thing to be able to say of a man that he has influenced the life of a great town like this; but we know that if this town of three hundred thousand inhabitants has its special characteristics and distinguishing virtues, which have made for it a foremost place in the Empire, these characteristics and virtues are chiefly due to the teaching of George Dawson, and to the works and labours of that school

of earnest fellow-workers, colleagues, and friends which he may be said to have founded in this town."

In spite of the help which Mr. Chamberlain thus willingly acknowledged, his task was by no means an easy one, and it says much for his tact and courtesy, as well as for his ability, that the reforms which he proposed, sweeping and costly as they were, found almost unanimous acceptance with his fellow-Councillors.

These achievements—the purchase of the Gas- and Water-works, and an extensive Town Improvement Scheme—are treated of in the following chapter. The general mayoral work in a town such as Birmingham is very varied and onerous, and requires a chapter to itself.

"It is by no means easy," said Mr. Bunce, "to estimate the amount or the value of the work done by such a Town Council as that of Birmingham—the time and thought required and the heavy sacrifices entailed. . . . Some of the chairmen of the most important committees give steadily, the year through, almost daily attendance, and others are closely occupied for two or three days in each week, while nearly all give up as much time as the head of a manufacturing or commercial firm usually devotes to his private business. . . .

"The Mayor . . . is expected, not only to represent the Corporation on all public, official, and ceremonial occasions, but also to make himself acquainted with the detailed business of each department. Practically for his year of office the whole time of the Chief Magistrate is given up to the public, and this involves attendance at the Council House and service in its Committee Rooms literally from morning to evening, with rare intervals for repose and relaxation."

During Mr. Chamberlain's first year of office the foundation stone of the Council House was laid amid general enthusiasm. It was fully time that the town should possess suitable municipal buildings. In the old days the administrative departments of the borough were not under one roof, but dispersed through

**Council  
House  
Foundation  
Stone Laid.  
June, 1874.**

several buildings, to the great hindrance and confusion of public business, while the Mayor had literally no place to call his own. "Until 1862, when the Council agreed to pay for a single room for him at the Town Clerk's office, he had either no room at all or had to pay for one out of his own pocket."

The site on which the Council House stands was bought as far back as 1853, but no real attempt was made to use it until 1868. Plans were sent in and accepted in 1871, and the corner stone was laid by Mr. Chamberlain in June, 1874. Mr. Chamberlain celebrated this important municipal event by a luncheon at the Great Western Hotel, and at his expense a great display of fireworks was given in the evening at Aston Park.

During the ceremony of the stone-laying he expressed his delight that there would now be, not only a place for Corporation business, but one in which many meetings (for which the Town Hall was unsuitable) might be held. How many worthy projects had found a grave in that subterranean chamber known as the Town Hall Committee Room !

"For many years we have conducted our municipal business in a mean and squalid chamber, affording limited accommodation but unlimited annoyance. We, the sanitary authorities of the borough, should no longer violate in our own persons every known rule of health."

The Mayor then expounded very clearly his views of the functions and importance of municipal bodies—views which he has never ceased to hold and which he has taken many opportunities of emphasising.

"I have," he said, "an abiding faith in municipal institutions ; I have a deep sense of the value and importance of local self-government. Our Corporation represents the authority of the people ; through us you obtain a full and direct representation of the popular will, and consequently any disrespect to us, anything which depreciates us in the public estimation, necessarily degrades the principles which

we represent, strikes through us at the Constitution itself, and lowers our authority and public usefulness. It behoves us to find fitting accommodation for our local Parliament. . . . In erecting buildings worthy of the population and importance of Birmingham we are not seeking to gratify our personal vanity or any petty sense of self-importance, but endeavouring to honour great principles of the importance of which we are firmly convinced, and to show our respect for the institutions upon which the welfare and happiness of the community very largely depend."

Mr. Chamberlain took this opportunity of expressing his  
 June, 1874. gratitude to his colleagues for their support of his schemes. During his year of Mayoralty he had met with uniform courtesy. In Birmingham, however hot their discussion, he said, antagonism was seldom allowed to overstep the limits of, or to interfere with, the mutual respect and good feeling which ought to characterise the private relationship of honourable and worthy opponents. "When shortly I lay down the chain of office, I hope I may be able to say, as to-day, that my official position has brought me many friends, but to my knowledge not a single enemy." But Mr. Chamberlain did not lay aside the mayoral chain in November. He retained it until June 1876, when he entered Parliament.

The next great local event was the visit of the Prince  
 Visit of the Prince of Wales, November, 1874. and Princess of Wales (November, 1874). It was a brilliant success. Their Royal Highnesses inspected Gillott's pen factory, and the Princess electro-plated a vase at Messrs. Elkington's; they were entertained to luncheon by Mr. Chamberlain at the rooms of the Society of Artists, (the best place that could then be found for so important a function), the Council House as yet being merely a skeleton building.

If rumour can be believed, the Prince was not only pleased with his reception, but also "enjoyed himself," to use a commonplace phrase. It is possible he was curious to see how the Mayor of Birmingham, who had the reputation of

being a theoretic Republican, would acquit himself while proposing the health of the Prince and Princess of Wales.

The *Times*—which in those days was by no means an admirer of Mr. Chamberlain, and one of the bitterest critics of his *Fortnightly* articles, (the second had been published the month before this visit)—referred to his speech as being couched in a tone of courteous homage, manly independence, and gentlemanly feeling.

After assuring the Prince that both the people and the authorities had done their best to offer the Princess and himself a hearty welcome, Mr. Chamberlain said:—

“We are so unaccustomed to the presence of such distinguished guests that it is possible we may have failed somewhat in the style of manner of our greeting, or in the ceremonial which has accompanied it; but I believe their Royal Highnesses will recognise the earnest wish to please, and the general satisfaction which their spontaneous visit has called forth, and cannot doubt that the result of this visit, under such circumstances, will be to draw closer the ties between the Throne and the people, and increase the popularity already enjoyed by members of the Royal House—a popularity based quite as much on their hearty sympathy and frank appreciation of the wishes of the nation as on their high position and exalted rank. . . .”

Mr. Chamberlain then thanked the Princess for undergoing the fatigue of a lengthened progress (in an open carriage in November) to gratify the people, who entertained a “sentiment of loyal affection and personal attachment for the graces of mind and character with which the Princess had adorned her life among the English people.”

“This town has long been distinguished, and not without cause, for the independence of its citizens, and the freedom and outspokenness with which all opinions are discussed; and this fact gives value to the welcome which has been offered, and stamps the sincerity of the wishes which are everywhere expressed for the continued health of their Royal Highnesses.”

Mr. Chamberlain naturally felt some indignation at the idea that it would be possible for him to treat the Prince and Princess with anything but courtesy.

"These people seem to forget," he observed, "that a man might be a gentleman as well as a Republican, and that even an advanced Liberal" [by which name Mr. Chamberlain preferred to designate his political opinions] "might not be unmindful of the duties of hospitality and the courtesy which everyone owes to a guest."

*Punch* issued a cartoon representing the Princess cutting the claws of the Republican lion (Mr. Chamberlain), with the following lines:—

"OUR BRUMMAGEM LION.

"Like a gentleman he comported himself in the glare of the Princely sun—  
Has just said what he ought to have said, and done what he ought to  
have done,

Has put his red cap in his pocket, and sat on his *Fortnightly* article,  
And of Red Republican claws and teeth displayed not so much as a  
particle."

The *Town Crier* published a cantata, "Judicious Joseph," in which Joseph is represented as bringing tidings of the Prince's visit. The people in chorus ask,—

"What will the Mayor do—what will he do?  
Will it not place him in a deuce of a stew—  
For how can he meet him or how can he greet him,  
Or how entertain him, address him and treat him?"

Joseph replies,—

"If the Prince I would not meet,  
You'd abuse me on the instant;  
When I say I will him treat,  
Then, forsooth, I'm inconsistent."

Mr. Chamberlain as Mayor was not only concerned with sewers and slums, but with the citizens' recreation and culture. He was greatly in favour of opening more parks and providing innocent enjoyment for the working population, the monotony and

**The Mayor  
and  
Recreation.**

deariness of whose lives strongly appealed to him. In his speech at the opening of Highgate Park (1876) he says: "It is simply nonsense to wonder at the want of refinement of our people when no opportunity is given for innocent enjoyment. We are too apt to forget that the ugliness of our ordinary English existence has a bad influence on us." A fine town with beautiful buildings and gardens was as much a power in education as any of the more direct educational influences. To the members of a young men's institute he expressed the opinion that when everyone had been taught to read and write they would still want rational recreation, which even the greatest students need.

Mr. Chamberlain took a keen interest in the development of the Birmingham Free Libraries and Art <sup>The Mayor and Art.</sup> Gallery. In April, 1875, Mr. Jesse Collings, Chairman of the Free Libraries Committee, presented a report announcing that reorganisation and rearrangement of the gallery were in contemplation, and read the following letter from Mr. Chamberlain:—

"SOUTHBOURNE, AUGUSTUS ROAD, EDGBASTON,  
"April 26th, 1875.

"MY DEAR COLLINGS,—I am anxious to show, in some <sup>Gifts to the Town.</sup> practical way, my confidence in our municipal institutions, and my grateful sense of the kindness which has always been extended to me by my colleagues of the Town Council. After some consideration I have determined to offer to the Council, through you, the sum of £1000, to be expended by the Free Libraries Committee in the purchase of objects of industrial art for permanent exhibition in the Art Gallery of this town. I am led to suggest this disposal of the gift by my knowledge that this branch of our work has suffered from the absence of funds applicable to the purpose, while at the same time, and even in its imperfect state, the gallery is one of the most popular and highly appreciated institutions governed by the Corporation.

"I am, my dear Collings,

"Yours sincerely,

"J. CHAMBERLAIN."



A very beautiful collection of precious stones was bought with this money. In 1881 Müller's "Prayer in the Desert" valued at £1,800 and its companion picture "A Street Scene in Cairo," were also given by Mr. Chamberlain to the Art Gallery.

In the year in which he entered Parliament Mr. Chamberlain terminated his connection with the Birmingham School Board, of which he had been Chairman during the three years of his Mayoralty. As a parting memorial he gave to the Board £500 for the foundation of a scholarship by means of which a promising boy or girl might obtain admission to one of the schools on King Edward VI.'s foundation in Birmingham, and so mount the educational ladder which leads from the Board school to the University, and which at least one Birmingham boy has climbed.

Before the Improvement Scheme took definite shape Mr. Chamberlain tried to awaken the town to a sense of its duties with respect to sanitation, and to that end arranged for a Sanitary Congress to meet in Birmingham. It was a great success and was largely attended. The reports of its meetings were read by Birmingham working men, some of whom tried in a rough fashion to profit by the lessons the great men of the Congress were inculcating. Between eight and nine hundred visitors accepted Mr. Chamberlain's invitation to be present.

The most valuable part of his mayoral work, as he has often admitted, was the opportunity it afforded him to become acquainted with the public life of the town. He entertained royalty, and presided at annual gatherings of missions and institutes. He made speeches at the master bakers' dinner, a young men's institute, a crèche, a co-operative society, a Women's Suffrage meeting; attended farewell dinners and school prize-givings; a board school contest, an election, the inspection of gasworks and sewage farms, a Parliamentary Commission, literary work—nothing seemed to come amiss or to give him too much trouble if his help was required. He was essentially a citizen, and identified himself with citizens.

**The Health  
of the  
Town.**

**Sanitary  
Congress.**

**Variety of  
Mayor's  
Work.**

## CHAPTER X

### *A MUNICIPAL REFORMER*

#### GAS, WATER, AND IMPROVEMENT SCHEME.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S greatest municipal achievements were the purchase of the Gas and Water, and the initiation of the Improvement Schemes. Resolutions to adopt his proposals were, in the case of the Water Scheme, carried unanimously by the Town Council, in the case of the other two with only one and two dissentients respectively.

Of these three great projects, the gas undertaking (speaking broadly) occupied the first mayoral year, the water the second, and the Improvement Scheme the third.

It may be thought that more time should have elapsed between the prosecution of such large enterprises, but there was a direct connection between them which made it advantageous to the Corporation to proceed with them as speedily as possible one after the other. The rapidity of their execution is rightly placed to Mr. Chamberlain's credit. From the first he conducted the negotiations and undertook the difficult task of presenting these ambitious proposals in a business-like and attractive manner to his more cautious and more apprehensive colleagues.

Briefly his reasons for advocating these reforms were as follows : For many years there had been difficulties with regard to the disposal of the sewage of the town ; expensive litigation was forced upon the Corporation, which would shortly be compelled to undertake far-reaching and costly sanitary improvements. They had

**Necessity  
for the  
Reforms.**

no surplus revenue with which to undertake these works, while the rates were very high and fast increasing. Other Corporations derived large sums in aid of the rates from dock dues, tramways, gas, and water-works. Of these sources of revenue only the two latter could possibly be available for Birmingham. But if they were placed in the hands of the Corporation great benefits would be conferred on the town, apart from the question of revenue.

The monopoly of the gas supply would give them money; the control of the water supply was vital for the health of the community; the Improvement Scheme would enable them to discharge their obligations as the Sanitary authorities, by cutting a broad street through one of the most crowded and insanitary quarters of the city. When the leases expired the whole of the property reverted to the Corporation, and would raise it to the position of one of the wealthiest in the country.

Mr. Chamberlain pointed out to his colleagues that the cost of purchasing the gas would be very great. The borough debt would rise from half a million to two and a half millions at once. There were two companies to be bought out—the Birmingham Gas Company and the Birmingham and Staffordshire. The total amount paid for these two properties was reported on December 31st, 1875, to be £1,953,050 18s. 11d.; but the bargain was an advantageous one for the Corporation as the profits for the first half-year amounted to £25,000.

In his speech in the Council proposing the municipalisation of the gasworks, Mr. Chamberlain laid down the principles on which their decision ought to be based:—

“ I distinctly hold that all monopolies which are sustained in any way by the State ought to be in the hands of the representatives of the people—by the representative authority should they be administered, and to them should their profits go, and not to private speculators. In the second place, . . . I am always inclined to magnify my office [as Mayor] : I am inclined to increase the duties and responsibilities

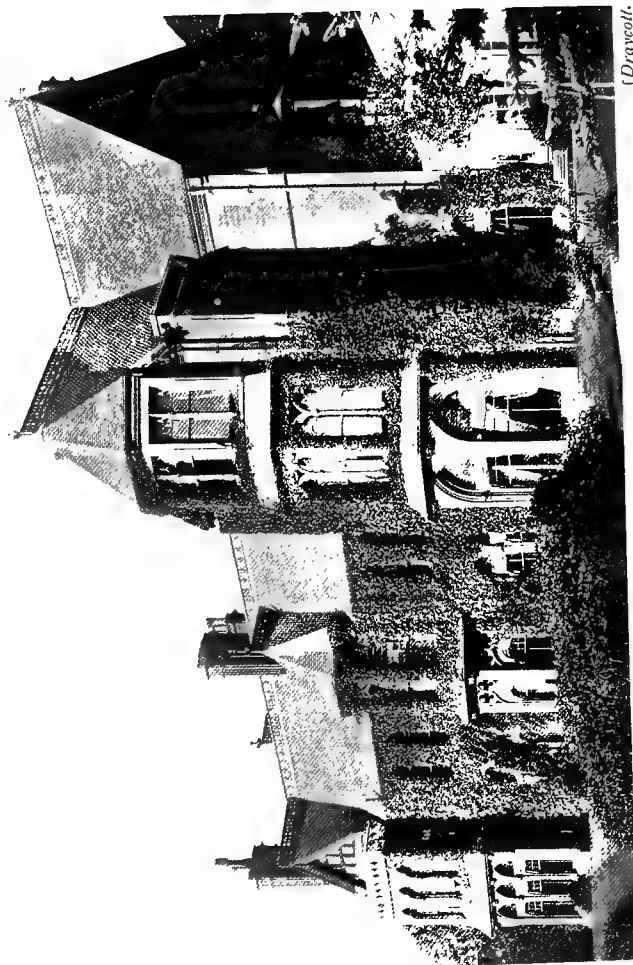
Speech  
Proposing  
Purchase  
of the  
Gasworks to  
the Town  
Council.

of the local authority, in whom I have myself so great a confidence, and will do everything in my power to constitute these local authorities real local Parliaments, supreme in their special jurisdiction. . . ." It was only because he was convinced of the perfect disinterestedness of his colleagues that he had the boldness to lay before the Council "this momentous proposition, involving as it does, if carried out to its legitimate conclusion, an enormous increase in the patronage and influence of the Council, a great aggrandisement of its power, its responsibilities, and its duties."

To the question, why he had not devoted his attention to the waterworks first, he answered that he hoped very soon to bring before the Council a proposition with regard to that great undertaking.

"But in the meantime I hope the Council will deal with the bird in hand, without waiting to consider the prospect of obtaining the bird in the bush. . . . When the purchase of the Water Works comes before you, it will be a question concerning the health of the town; the acquisition of the Gas Works concerns the profits of the town and its financial resources. . . . Both are matters of absolute public necessity."

With regard to the delicate question whether a bargain between the companies and the Corporation could be mutually advantageous, there were several reasons why such might be the case, particularly as considerable saving would be effected in management, cost of collecting rates, and in avoiding the necessity for a double service of mains. Lastly, the Corporation would have the great advantage of the difference between dividends which the companies would have paid and the interest at which the municipal authorities could borrow the capital needed. Had they decided on this step fifteen years ago, they would at the moment be saving £15,000 a year. In conclusion he asked the Council to approve a measure which "would secure and extend its authority, confirm its privileges and power, and relieve the ratepayers of burdens becoming every day more onerous."



*Photo by]*

HUGHBURY, NEAR BIRMINGHAM, MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S COUNTRY HOUSE.  
Specially taken (by permission) for this book.

*[Drycoll.*



The proceedings at the ratepayers' meeting which was **Ratepayers' Meeting.** called to discuss the question were lively. Considerable scepticism was evinced as to the possibility of business men like the gas companies' directors agreeing to a bargain which should leave any margin of profit for the Corporation. It was contended that the Corporation could only make a profit by raising the price of gas to the consumer, and therefore the ratepaying consumer would save nothing. Mr. Chamberlain denied this. "Will you guarantee what you say?" called out a ratepayer. "Yes, I will," returned Mr. Chamberlain.

"To make a profit in that way would be a mere juggle; it would be merely taking out of one pocket to put it in another, a proceeding with which I should be thoroughly ashamed to be connected. . . ."

A gentleman who was present relates that, when Mr Chamberlain mentioned the satisfactory sum for which the undertaking could be bought, a prominent opponent inquired sarcastically: "Would you give that for it?" "I would," was the prompt reply.

"I will repeat," said Mr. Chamberlain, "the offer I made to the Corporation, that if they will take this offer and farm it out to me I will pay them £20,000 a year for it, and at the end of fourteen years I shall have a snug little fortune of £180,000 or £200,000. . . . Councillor Stone asks us to throw away future large profits for the sake of present small gains. I cannot accept that as my line of policy; it is not the way in which I have been in the habit of conducting my own private business. I ask you to believe I am actuated simply by the desire to do something to serve the town in which I have lived so long and to which I owe so much."

The audience knew very well that Mr. Chamberlain was in a position to retire from business, and his reference to his own method of conducting his private affairs came with considerable force. In the opinion of most of his fellow-citizens he might be trusted to know what a good bargain was, and

clearly he could have no possible reason for advocating the scheme if it were not profitable. A majority of the ratepayers voted for the scheme.

In 1879 Mr. Chamberlain reviewed the results of this purchase. Put briefly, it amounted to this :—

Carried to the Relief of Rates	...	...	£80,000
" " Reserve Fund	...	..	£50,000
" " Sinking Fund	...	...	£35,000

Meanwhile two reductions in price of gas, of threepence per thousand cubic feet each, had been made in the three years, amounting to a sum of £60,000 per annum, the gas at the same time being of a higher quality than formerly—in fact it compared favourably with that of other boroughs.

The Corporation might therefore fairly congratulate themselves on this bargain, as they could now spare £25,000 annually, for items of expenditure not otherwise provided for out of the rates.

Perhaps the only grave municipal mistake Mr. Chamberlain made was in under-estimating the growth of the electric light industry. We have lived to see electricity "on tap in our cellars," though he thought there was "no appreciable chance of such a discovery"; but, nevertheless, gas in Birmingham is more largely consumed than ever, and the Corporation gasworks still continue to yield a handsome profit. Mr. Chamberlain however, wisely took advantage of the electric light scare to obtain consent to carry a larger sum to the sinking fund, with the object of sooner paying off their liabilities.

In referring to his co-workers, he said: "Our labours have been very arduous, . . . and in the case of some of my colleagues, at all events, they have been only performed under a deep sense of public duty, which has involved considerable sacrifice of personal interest and domestic ease." In concluding his review of the three years' work he made generous acknowledgment of the unpaid services which the Corporation



and gas department staff had rendered in giving "an immense amount of extraordinary labour which work of this kind involves, and which is hardly provided for in the ordinary terms of service."

Both the Gas Bill and the Water-works Bill passed through Parliament in the spring of 1875, and received the Royal Assent in August of that year. The Artisans' Dwellings and Improvement Act became law on July 13th, 1875.

Mr. Chamberlain lost no time in getting to work. At a Council meeting held on July 27th he had the pleasure of moving the appointment of a Committee to deal with each of the three projects which, as Mayor, he had proposed to his colleagues. He himself took the chairmanship of the Gas Committee, and on his election to Parliament in June, 1876, a Deputy Chairman was appointed, Mr. Chamberlain continuing to be a member of all the three committees till he took office as Minister in 1880, when his connection with the Council ceased.

In the vote of thanks given to him on that occasion the Gas Committee record their sense of the "unsparing skill and devotion with which he has administered the affairs of the department, . . ." and of "the unvarying kindness and courtesy in the discharge of the duties of his office," . . . by which "he has won the lasting esteem and regard of every member of the Committee."

The Deputy Chairman of the first Gas Committee, who eventually succeeded him as Chairman, writes :—

"I was present at the final negotiations with the Birmingham Gas Company, and was at once impressed with the thorough grasp of the subject which Mr. Chamberlain displayed, and the masterly way in which he dealt with the complicated questions which emerged. It was no light task to amalgamate two companies, each with extensive works, two secretaries, two engineers, two staffs of officers ; yet the final result secured much more perfect management, security, and economy, and the ratepayers reaped the advantage. The works were enormously increased, the expenditure

was rigidly controlled, and at the same time the condition of the workmen was materially improved. As the work progressed I found evidence of Mr. Chamberlain's great ability, not only with respect to finance, but in his knowledge of the intricacies of gas manufacturing and of the general principles on which the work must be conducted.

"As Mr. Chamberlain was detained at Westminster, I had the honour of presenting the first annual report of the Gas Committee, and was able to show a net profit of £34,122, besides carrying large sums to depreciation and sinking fund, thus more than justifying Mr. Chamberlain's predictions. The Council, after approving the report, adopted the very unusual course of moving a special vote of thanks to the Gas Committee.

"I consider Mr. Chamberlain the most able negotiator I have ever met. He always discerned the line of least resistance, and advanced along it, concentrating his force on the vital points to be secured, while surrendering, where necessary, unimportant advantages. There was no guess-work in his methods; he secured exact information, carefully prepared his plans, and in a word, knew exactly what he wanted and how to get it."

	The waterworks were acquired by the town on January
	1st, 1876. The property was paid for by
<b>Waterworks</b>	
<b>Purchase of</b>	granting perpetual annuities of £54,491, which at
<b>1876.</b>	
<b>Cost.</b>	twenty-five years' purchase was equivalent to
	£1,350,000.

A better supply of water was urgently needed. In 1869 one hundred and fifty thousand people were dependent on wells, many of which were polluted and ought to have been closed. In his speech proposing the purchase of the water supply of the town to the Council, Mr. Chamberlain pointed out that the closing of the wells would greatly increase the profits of the water companies, which "profits we are afterwards expected to buy at an enormous premium." As the Council had no choice but to close the wells, it would be cheaper for them to buy out the companies first, and then administer the water supply as efficiently and as cheaply as possible.

"What do you think," asked Mr. Chamberlain, "of the inhabitants being compelled to drink water which <sup>The</sup> <sup>Necessity.</sup> is as bad again as sewage before clarification? . . .

"Not merely is the water supply of Birmingham bad in quality, as I have pointed out already, but it is altogether insufficient in many cases. . . . I have been told by one of the oldest magistrates of Birmingham that, within his knowledge, courts of houses have been deliberately erected contiguous to each other, one court of which has been supplied with waterworks water and the next court has been left without any provision at all, the designer deliberately intending that his tenants should steal the water from the other court which *had* been provided for. For my part, I hold that it is a positive disgrace to us that such a large proportion of our population should be placed in the alternative of either stealing the pure water or drinking water which contains the germs of ill-health and of death."

The right principle to consider in conducting the negotiations was, he considered, that of securing to the shareholders the profits which the companies could clearly show were likely to continue under their management; but profits which are due to the growth and increase of the town "belong, as I hold, to the ratepayers, and not to these private speculators."

His evidence, as given before the House of Commons' Committee, was clear and convincing, and of much value to the corporation in fighting the exorbitant claims made by the companies, who refused to sell unless compelled to do so. "We have not," he said, "the slightest intention of making a profit. . . . We shall get our profit indirectly in the comfort of the town and in the health of the inhabitants."

The closing of the wells naturally caused inconvenience, and in the case of landlords who were thereby obliged to provide waterworks water, there was much grumbling. But the benefits to the town generally and to the poor in particular, were enormous. The Bill became law in August, 1875.

"Having purchased the waterworks," says one critic,

"the Corporation were, of course, desirous to make it pay. To buy the thing was a blunder in the eyes of some, to let it be a source of loss would have been a crime. Consequently it became necessary to force the water supply business, and the municipal authorities went about it in a way that pressed hardly sometimes and provoked not a little resentment."

If by this is meant that the Corporation closed wells which were pure in order to compel the use of their water, the facts do not bear out such a statement. It is true that here and there a well may have been condemned unnecessarily, but such closing was due to an excess of sanitary zeal. The pollution was so widespread, and of so horrible and so dangerous a character, that Mr. Chamberlain and those who went with him in this matter were determined to err on the right side. Moreover, as they were on the point of undertaking sanitary reforms of the most sweeping character, there would be little good in clearing out pestilential dens and sweeping away rookeries, if the tenements which were left had only impure or very doubtful water.

The working of the water department by the Council was satisfactory, and Mr. Bunce, writing in 1884, said that it provided for the whole of its liabilities, and the water rate had been substantially reduced. Subsequently a large scheme for supplying Birmingham from the Elan Valley in Wales was undertaken.

The Improvement Scheme made a very considerable difference to the appearance as well as to the healthiness of Birmingham. The most striking alteration was the formation of a handsome street (appropriately named Corporation Street) right through one of the worst and most dangerous quarters of the town, for the places that were swept away harboured criminals and pestilence both; morally and physically, some of these localities were as bad as it was possible for them to be.

The condemned area lay immediately behind one of the wealthiest and most important parts of the town, and the new thoroughfare ran at right angles from New Street,

terminating in a very poor district. The ground rents of the land at the best end of the street paid, to some extent, for the loss caused by the destruction of the slums at the other, and, further, by pouring in a stream of fresh air through what was one of the most crowded parts of the town, at once improved its health.

Mr. Chamberlain's own explanation of the scheme shows that he had taken the miserable condition of the people over whom he was placed very seriously to heart. In laying his proposals before the Council, he said :—

Mr.  
Chamberlain  
Explains  
his Scheme.

“ We want to make these people healthier and better ; I want to make them happier also. Let us consider for a moment the forlorn and desolate lives the best of these people must live, in courts like those described. It made my heart bleed when I heard the descriptions of Mr. White and others of the dreariness—the intense dreariness—and the lack of everything which would add interest or pleasure to the life which obtains among that class. . . . I know for a fact that there are people there almost as ignorant of what is going on around them as if they lived in a lonely and savage island. . . . Some would even lose themselves in New Street. There are people who do not know that there is an existence on the other side of the Town Hall ; people who are as ignorant of all that goes to make the pleasure, the interest, the activity, and the merit of our lives, as if they were savages in Ceylon, instead of being Englishmen and Englishwomen in the nineteenth century enjoying all the blessings of civilisation. . . . ”

Mr. Chamberlain estimated the preventible deaths yearly at three thousand, and eighteen thousand people suffered annually from preventible diseases. Assuming six weeks as the average duration of sickness, and allowing only ten shillings per head per week for medical attendance, loss of wages, and other matters, these people cost the town at least £54,000 a year, sufficient to pay for the improvement three or four times over (for Mr. Chamberlain had calculated that the average cost of the whole scheme was to be

£12,000 yearly). Was that too much to pay for such an improvement as was proposed?

"The town must pay for this state of things in meal or malt. . . . We must pay in our health or with our money. . . . Those who die are even happier than those who live to drag out a wretched existence in the courts we have heard described. . . .

"We bring up a population in the dank, dark, dreary, filthy courts and alleys such as are to be found throughout the area we have selected; we surround them with noxious influences of every kind, and place them under conditions in which the observance of even ordinary decency is impossible. And what is the result? What can we expect from that kind of thing? I think Mr. White said the other day that to some extent the position of the people was their own fault, and I heard a cheer when that statement was made. But I am sure Mr. White only meant that to be true in a very limited sense.

"Their fault!

"Yes, it is legally their fault, and when they steal we send them to gaol, and when they commit murder we hang them. But if the members of this Council had been placed under similar conditions—if from infancy we had grown up in the same way—does any one of us believe that we should have run no risk of the gaol or the hangman? For my part I have not sufficient confidence in my own inherent goodness to believe that anything can make headway against such frightful conditions as those I have described. The fact is, it is no more the fault of these people that they are vicious and intemperate than it is their fault that they are stunted, deformed, debilitated, and diseased. The one is due to the physical atmosphere—the moral atmosphere as necessarily and surely produces the other."

That Mr. Chamberlain had not exaggerated the evils of the district with which it was proposed to deal will be clearly seen from the report of the late Mr. Councillor White, who, as Councillor for the ward in which the worst districts lay, had a most intimate knowledge of their condition derived from continued personal visitation.

**Sanitary  
Condition  
of the  
Condemned  
Area.**

"It is not easy," he said in his report, "to describe or imagine the dreary desolation which acre after acre of the town presents to anyone who will take the trouble to visit it. . . . The rubbish and dilapidation in whole quarters have reminded me of Strasburg, which I saw soon after the bombardment. . . .

"In one case a filthy drain from a neighbouring court oozed into a little back yard; in another the sitting-room windows could not be opened owing to the horrible effluvia from a yawning midden just under it; in another case the fireside of the only sitting-room had to be deserted, owing to the noxious percolation from a privy penetrating the wall within a foot or two of the easy-chair. . . .

"In other cases I have penetrated court behind court in which the space between a high wall on one side and the door of the houses on the other was so narrow that it would not permit of my umbrella being placed horizontally between them. In this very place were two cases of smallpox and one of scarlet-fever. . . ."

As to the moral effects of living in such places, Mr. White related that he constantly heard such complaints as—

"'I never drank too much till I come into this 'ere hell of a place.'

"'What have people got to do but to drink here? It is about their only comfort. There is nothing but dirt and nastiness to live in, and stinks and smells.'

"'Young 'uns die off pretty quickly, that's certain—there's more bugs than babies!'

"'The parsons tell us to be good; nobody can't be good in such places as these.'

"You, Mr. Mayor," continued Mr. White addressing Mr. Chamberlain, "have, I know, in connection with the benevolent and humanising work at Lawrence Street Chapel, done much to mitigate the evils of which I speak, but all seems like a drop in the bucket considering what ought further to be done."

Mr. Chamberlain said very plainly how earnestly he hoped the Council would stand by him in this matter, and how great was his desire to see the scheme carried out.

"I have had the matter under my consideration for a long time ; it has been a matter of continued and anxious deliberation with me. I have thought of it during the day, I have thought of it during the night, and I have even dreamt of it, and I have come to the conclusion that under any circumstances I would still recommend the Council to adopt the scheme. It is a case in which bold action will be, in the long run, the cheapest and the most profitable. . . .

"We shall become the ultimate freeholders of forty acres of land . . . we throw open four and a half acres of streets, we add four and a half acres to the fresh-air spaces of the town. . . . I believe that the town, and above all the next generation, will have cause to bless the Town Council of Birmingham if it carries the scheme before it, and exercises what I venture to call a sagacious audacity.

"It is the only occasion for which I ever wish to live beyond the ordinary term of human life, in order to see the result of this improvement and hear the blessings that will then be showered upon the Council of 1875 which had the courage to inaugurate this scheme . . . which will make this borough the richest borough in the kingdom sixty or seventy years hence."

Criticism on the scheme was invited by Mr. Chamberlain from the Council and the town. It was hardly necessary to issue the invitation ; the criticism was more than ready, and it burst forth in a great stream. The Artisans' Dwellings Act, it was alleged, was intended to be used for sanitary improvements only, and not for general town improvements.

Mr. Chamberlain answered this objection by saying :—

"Let us work the whole scheme under the Act. . . . That will not be in the slightest degree a wresting of the intention of the Act. . . . I had several interviews with Mr. Cross, who was in charge of the Bill, and he told me himself, in answer to my inquiries, that it was intended to let in such approaches to an improvement as those now proposed to the Council, and which I described to Mr. Cross."

As a matter of fact, one portion of the scheme could not be financially worked without the other.



"There is," said Mr. Chamberlain, "the criticism which betrays on the face of it its object and its motives, which is dictated by disappointed vanity or political rancour. That is a criticism which we must bear with what patience we may. It is part of the burden imposed on everyone who leaves private life in order to attempt any public service. But there is another kind of criticism which is as much to be courted and prized as the first is to be condemned and despised—that is, the criticism which is the honest and the honourable contribution of those who, having common objects, desire to secure in the best possible way our common end. That is the criticism which I invite, as I have said, at your hands, and at the hands of the town."

Great differences of opinion as to the merits of a scheme which involved such an expenditure of public money might honestly exist. Buyer and seller do not usually agree as to the value of property, and where freeholder, leaseholder, and occupier have all to be dealt with, the negotiations are naturally complicated. But looking back on the working out of the scheme, it is rather to be wondered at that more mistakes were not made. On the whole it has been a success, and though it has not been found possible to provide for so many of the disestablished poor as was hoped and expected, this has in many cases been a benefit, as it has compelled the erection of vast numbers of small houses, moderately rented, in the suburbs.

As there was no fund available for the purchase of properties before the Act came into force, Mr. Chamberlain guaranteed £10,000 towards an Improvement Trust Fund, which was largely contributed to by other public men.

## CHAPTER XI

### *SOCIAL LIFE AND INFLUENCE*

RETIRES FROM BUSINESS—PRIVATE LIFE—SECOND MARRIAGE—LIFE  
AT SOUTHBOURNE—BIRMINGHAM MEN—THE COMIC PAPERS—  
PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

"IN 1874," said Mr. Chamberlain, "I made up my mind that I must retire from business. Municipal life completely swallowed up commercial life."

He was now in command of a fortune sufficient, not only for a Mayor of Birmingham, but for the greater needs of a Member of Parliament or of a Cabinet Minister.

Mr. Chamberlain's parents had come to Birmingham many years previously, and settled at Moor Green Hall, **Retires from Business.** now the residence of Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, **1874.** a pretty old-fashioned place close to Highbury. Here they lived till their deaths, respectively in 1874 and 1875. Mr. Chamberlain, senior, actively engaged in business in Birmingham, and was a partner in the firm of Messrs. Smith and Chamberlain, large brassfounders. He took a keen interest in the life of the town and subscribed liberally to its charities: to the National Education League he gave a sum of £1,000. He had the happiness of seeing his son in a singularly successful position as a commercial man, and of knowing that he had been elected to hold the highest office in the town to which he came as a complete stranger.

Two of Joseph Chamberlain's brothers joined him in the screw trade, and they retired from business at the same time (1874). All of them associated themselves with the work

of the Church of the Messiah, and as Richard Chamberlain took a prominent part in public work, his career will be noticed later.

Mr. Chamberlain was personally very popular in the Council, as well as in Birmingham society generally. One of his colleagues says :—

“ His speeches at this time in the Council were clear, well arranged, and persuasive. He took much pains to attach the members of the Council to himself and to persuade them to his own views, raising their self-respect and gradually introducing a higher tone. As his influence and following increased, his policy in this respect remained the same. Though somewhat dogmatic, his satire, if keen, was never malicious, as is alleged. He could be hard upon bores and severe upon obstructionists. One worthy but garrulous old member, who had made a foolish speech in a ward meeting and who had no small opinion of himself, he likened to ‘an old hen who goes about cackling when she thinks she has laid an egg.’

“ I remember on the occasion of the debates on the abolition of the annual fairs which were held in Birmingham, Mr. Chamberlain amused us by saying that he should oppose the motion ” [that they be discontinued], “ as he approved of the annual holiday and used to send his children and servants to see the booths. He supported his opposition on the ground that the people needed all the innocent recreation they could get.”

“ It must be remembered,” said Mr. Chamberlain in referring to this debate in later years, “ that the people had not then the many opportunities for recreation which they now have. The fair was also undoubtedly a time of great enjoyment to the country people, who could combine a pleasure trip to town with business. The opposition to the fairs was, I considered, got up in the interests of certain tradesmen who were annoyed by the crowds collected and by the temporary suspension of their business.”

But the fairs were abolished notwithstanding Mr. Chamberlain’s defence of them.

His demeanour in Council was generally quiet in spite of

his intense enthusiasm in the schemes that he was bringing forward, and of the earnestness with which he expounded his views. But when he was roused he was a formidable opponent.

On one occasion there was a "scene" in the Council, in consequence of the attempt of one of the members to abuse, not only Mr. Chamberlain's confidence, but his hospitality. A local paper (*The Dart*) thus records the incident. In the course of an attack on the Improvement Scheme, a member of the Council hinted that he was about to reveal an after-dinner conversation which had taken place at Southbourne (Mr. Chamberlain's private house). Another member of the Council indignantly protested,—

"and then in a white heat Mr. Chamberlain rose, and said that, as his opponent had not scrupled to read letters without permission from the writers, he begged him not to scruple to repeat anything which was said at his [Mr. Chamberlain's] house, when he was admitted to the dining-room."

Another scene of a different kind is also described :—

"It was the gas budget day, and we had a full house. Our Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury, and Chancellor of the Exchequer had to unfold the beauties of as roseate a balance sheet as ever drew honied words from the lips of mortal chairman.

"Mr. Chamberlain had not the red camelia in his button-hole that he sported the day that the Council House was opened, but he was got up to look as like sweet sixteen as possible, and for an Alderman without a corporation (his own joke) he looked his loveliest. I pictured him a few years hence, when, perhaps, wearing the highest honours a sovereign may confer, and standing on the Ministerial side of the table in the other House, he dwells with gleeful delight on a splendid surplus. . . .

"To-day he had a splendid surplus (£54,000) to announce and a welcome threepence to take off our gas. Besides, he dealt with the whole gas question in a most lucid and exhaustive manner, and I for one, never knew one-tenth

part so much about it as I do now. . . . Mr. Chamberlain deserves high praise for his magnificent working of the gas concern. Can we always have it worked so well? That thought alone disturbs me.

"Mr. Chamberlain to-day took a new lease of municipal life and popularity, and if he will only keep his friends' zeal down a bit, and train them to show a little of his magnanimity by using their power kindly and gently when forbearance is gracious and generous, it will be a long time before his position as leader of our municipality is impaired."

Mr. Chamberlain at this time was extraordinarily youthful in appearance, with a slim, upright figure, fresh complexion, and clean-shaven face. He was noted for the extreme care and neatness of his dress; even at a ward meeting he has been described as appearing "in a black velvet coat, jaunty eyeglass in eye, red neck-tie drawn through a ring, very smart indeed."

Soon after he was elected Town Councillor he sauntered one day into the Committee Room of the Town Hall, where a discussion was proceeding as to how to raise money for some public object. Mr. Chamberlain merely looked on, and presently said quietly: "Put me down, Mr. Mayor, for £5." The Mayor glanced at him a moment, as if he were not at all sure who the subscriber was. "Who's that?" said someone in a loud whisper. "That? Oh! that's Chamberlain." "Isn't he a swell?" was the answer. The unknown Councillor was dressed in a long, well-cut drab overcoat, he wore a red tie and single eyeglass, but the orchid is not mentioned.

Mr. Jesse Collings tells another story illustrating the difficulty strangers had in believing Mr. Chamberlain was of mature years. They were abroad together, and, not finding at Malaga the boat they wanted to take them on to Gibraltar, they went on board a small steamer and tried to arrange with the captain to take them over. He refused, having, as he declared, no accommodation for passengers. Under pressure, however, he consented to give up his cabin to Mr. Collings, saying, "You can take my berth; the youngster must knock it out on the sofa."

At a Town Hall meeting the writer heard a stranger, who saw Mr. Chamberlain for the first time, exclaim—" *That* Chamberlain? Why, he's a widower, isn't he? and he hardly looks as if he could be married!"

By Mr. Chamberlain's second marriage there were three daughters and one son, Arthur Neville. But in **Death of Mrs. Chamberlain.** February, 1875, a further bereavement fell upon the Mayor of Birmingham, for Mrs. Chamberlain died after a short and sudden illness. Very great sympathy was felt for her husband, who at the height of his municipal popularity, and with a fair prospect of a political career immediately before him, lost the affectionate support of that friend who above all others would have most rejoiced in his success. The Town Council adjourned as a mark of respect, and at the following meeting passed a resolution of condolence:—

"The members of this Council, while feeling deeply the solemnity of the silent respect due to a great sorrow, cannot, in justice to themselves or to the town they represent, refrain from expressing their profound sympathy with the Mayor, Alderman Chamberlain, in the sad affliction which in the providence of God has fallen upon him.

"They know well, and remember gratefully, that the wife he mourns has nobly shared many of his public duties, and that the gracious influence of her pure character has always been exerted on behalf of whatever could alleviate the miseries of the sick and destitute, and conduce to the general well-being of this community; and they assure the Mayor that he has not only won their high admiration for the unselfish devotion with which he has applied his great abilities to the service of the town, but that their intimate association in office has united them to him by those personal ties of regard which render his bitter sufferings common to themselves; and they trust that time may bring to their dear colleague the solace of resignation."

Mr. Chamberlain was in the south of France when he replied to this kindly expression of affection and sorrow. After thanking them for their sympathy on the occasion of



*Photo by]*

*[Draycott.*

THE ORCHID HOUSE, HIGHBURY.





the irreparable loss he had so recently sustained, and assuring them that he would always retain a grateful appreciation of their kindness, Mr. Chamberlain said :—

“Under the altered conditions of my life, however, I feel that it will be impossible for me to fulfil any longer all the duties of the honourable office to which they have twice elected me. Besides the ordinary work of the Council and the committee which perhaps I might still hope to perform, the Mayor of Birmingham is called upon to discharge many other social and public duties, the fulfilment of which has been a source of happiness and satisfaction in the past, but is quite beyond my power in the future.

“Consequently I feel it my duty at once to tender my resignation of the office of Mayor to the Council, and at the same time to assure them of my readiness and desire to serve the town in connection with any of the committees of the Council to which they may be pleased to appoint me.”

But the Council would not accept the Mayor's resignation. They begged that he would withdraw it, and assured him that his services and his counsel as Mayor were essential to the satisfactory conduct of the Parliamentary business to which the borough stood committed, and that, while deeply sympathising with him, they would readily do their part “to relieve the Mayor from those merely ceremonial duties which he justly feels that he cannot now discharge.”

Mr. Chamberlain returned to his work in the following March. He thanked his colleagues for this further evidence “of your sympathy and friendship, and more especially for the just appreciation you have shown of the nobility and worth of the wife I have lost, whose counsel and sympathy and encouragement were never wanting in all that seemed likely to promote the welfare and happiness of others.” He added that he would continue his mayoral duties “in the full assurance that you will extend to me the support and consideration which have made my past work easy, and of which I now stand in greater need than ever.”

At this time he was living at Southbourne, Augustus Road, Edgbaston, near The Dales, the residence of Mr. George Dixon, the junior Member for the borough, who was also Chairman of the National Educational League, and one of his earliest friends.

Southbourne was but half an hour's walk from the Council House, and was pleasantly situated in a part of Edgbaston still fresh and open. The house was not large, as compared with Highbury. It possessed a very fine library with a panelled ceiling and carved oak fittings, designed by the late Mr. J. H. Chamberlain, an intimate friend (though not a relative).

He entertained largely and judiciously; few men well known in Birmingham for work or for learning but have been at one time or another included among his guests. Artists, scientists, educationists, Town Councillors, masters of King Edward VI.'s Schools, those interested in the foundation of Mason College (opened October, 1880), and many distinguished visitors to the town, might all be met at Southbourne. Here were given those pleasant dinners at which men interested in the development of their beloved town met and discussed fresh plans and higher ideals of municipal life.

Dr. Crosskey, the Unitarian minister; Dr. Dale, the Independent; Charles Vince, the Baptist; George Dawson; J. S. Wright, President of the "Six Hundred"; Dixon, Bright, and Muntz, the Members; Sir Walter Foster and other distinguished medical men; J. T. Bunce, the ablest editor Birmingham has ever seen; Jesse Collings, Mr. Chamberlain's lifelong and intimate friend;—these are but a few of the men who, though they may not have had a national reputation, should yet be included amongst those whose work has largely contributed to the success of the man whose reputation is international.

But less-known men were not forgotten by Mr. Chamberlain, and his hospitality was extended to those whose names have never appeared prominently in connection with their work for the town, but whose conscientious devotion to

dry detail in civic matters, preserved that high standard of public work and of honourable emulation in the public service, which it is Mr. Chamberlain's greatest merit to have developed.

"The Southbourne library was the scene of many a symposium; here the affairs of the town were freely canvassed and many plans discussed. Mr. Chamberlain's invitations were judicious, bringing together men who had much in common and who had something to say worth hearing, and he was always particularly thoughtful to invite from time to time the chief officials of the Corporation. He was an admirable and gracious host, and all the appointments of the house and table were in perfect taste."

He remained at this house until 1880, so that not only his municipal, but four years of his Parliamentary life were passed there.

In 1873 Mr. John Morley and Admiral Maxse came to Birmingham to make the acquaintance of the man who was so fiercely opposing Mr. Forster and his educational policy. . . . The friendship between the editor of the *Fortnightly* and the Mayor of Birmingham grew rapidly; the former was a frequent guest at Southbourne, and the two men were at that time on terms of the closest intimacy.

Other well-known Liberals—Sir William Harcourt, Lord Rosebery, Mr. Goschen—were also visitors, and he had the pleasure of entertaining Mr. Gladstone on the occasion of his first visit to Birmingham (May, 1877).

Looking back to this time, perhaps that which strikes the observer most about Mr. Chamberlain is the unusual interest which attached to all he said and did, and the interest with which he contrived to invest commonplace persons and things. He was brimful of enthusiasm of a quiet kind and had the power of presenting his views in so forcible and attractive a form that his hearer was often persuaded "that that was just what he had been feeling all along, although he had not been able to put it into shape."

His relations with the Corporation officials and servants were particularly pleasant, and he always insisted that they must be properly paid. "Unless the Council feels it to be its truest economy to give sufficient remuneration to those whom they may employ in connection with these undertakings," said Mr. Chamberlain, "the less it has to do with them the better."

If in debate he was at times unnecessarily bitter and sarcastic, in private he would generously acknowledge the good qualities of the man he had in public fiercely opposed.

His work for the town was a labour of love.

"Birmingham," he said, "is not my native town—I wish it were; but it is the town of my adoption and predilection. I have lived here about twenty years" [spoken in 1874], "and I think it the finest, the most intelligent, the most patriotic town on the face of the universe, and I am prepared to maintain the same opinion before any audience in or out of Birmingham. At the same time, my favourite town, I admit it with grief and sorrow, is not perfect. . . .

"I do not think, mind, that Birmingham is so bad as some other great towns, but still it is bad enough, and so long as this great blot" [neglect of sanitation] "remains on the fair fame of our town, all its well-wishers are bound to put their shoulders to the wheel and try to remove it, and so, by God's help, we will; and by the assistance of my colleagues in the Council I hope that in twelve months the town won't know itself."

Perhaps all Mr. Chamberlain's fair dreams were not realised, and many of them not with the rapidity which he desired. But it is certain that within his three years of Mayoralty, he attempted more and he accomplished more than any other of Birmingham's Chief Magistrates: the time was ripe and the man appeared. He was most loyally supported and was ever anxious to acknowledge the value of that support.

It may be added that with his election to Parliament Mr. Chamberlain's interest in the town was in no way diminished;

and in 1878, when reviewing the progress of the Improvement Scheme, he said that local affairs were then to him even more important than his Parliamentary interests ; he would never sacrifice the former for the latter.

“ I can only say that if I had been actuated (as my political opponents not very charitably impute to me), in the endeavours which I have made to serve the town in which I have lived so long and to which I owe so much, by a desire to make those services the mere stepping-stone to what they are pleased to call a higher position, then it would have been very natural that as soon as I had reached this object I should have kicked down the ladder by which I had risen—that I should have declined, as far as it was in my power to do so, all further responsibility in the work we have done together ; that I should have ceased to prosecute with you the great undertakings which jointly we have initiated and have hitherto successfully carried forward.

“ That is not the view I take of my duty. If these positions are incompatible, I say that, without a moment's hesitation, I am prepared to resign the Parliamentary trust which has been reposed in me into the hands from which I have received it ; but I will not resign the opportunity of endeavouring with you, and in connection with municipal work, to serve the town, and of sharing the responsibility and interest of local work, which has formed my pleasure and which has occupied a large portion of my time during the last few years of my life.”



**Book III**  
**LIFE AS A LIBERAL M.P.**  
**1876—1886**





## CHAPTER XII

### *THE NEW M.P. FOR BIRMINGHAM*

ELECTED M.P., JUNE 1876—FIRST SPEECH TO CONSTITUENTS—FIRST SPEECH IN HOUSE, AUGUST 1876—ITS RECEPTION—FIRST WORK—THE GOTHENBURG SYSTEM AND LATER OPINIONS ON TEMPERANCE REFORM—STYLE OF SPEAKING.

**M**R. CHAMBERLAIN'S mayoral duties were now to be replaced by the absorbing, exciting, and responsible duties of Parliamentary life.

That life has now (1900) lasted twenty-four years, ten of which have been spent as Cabinet Minister, including four as President of the Board of Trade, with a short interval as President of the Local Government Board, and the last five at the Colonial Office. He entered the House at the age of forty, and the Cabinet at the age of forty-four. If many Members make an earlier entry into Parliamentary life, few achieve so complete a success or so rapid a promotion.

It was natural that the people of Birmingham should have looked to him as their future Parliamentary representative: he had identified himself with the town in every possible way; he was fitted to take charge of their interests in the House of Commons, and he had shown that he understood the wider issues of national politics. His fellow-citizens confidently expected great things of him.

In June, 1876, Mr. George Dixon resigned his seat in consequence of his wife's ill-health, and Mr. Chamberlain was returned unopposed, amidst great enthusiasm, on June 17th, 1876.

He addressed his constituents (June 28) in Bingley Hall, an immense building annually used for cattle shows. The number of people that can be packed into it at a public meeting is uncertain; twenty thousand would be a low estimate—it has even been put at thirty thousand. Notwithstanding the heat (it was a hot summer's night) and the crush, the crowd listened to Mr. Chamberlain's long speech with the closest attention; he was at the height of his popularity, and Birmingham hardly knew whether to be prouder of her senior Member, John Bright, or of her junior Member, Joseph Chamberlain.

When he rose to speak there was a tumult in the hall, and he had to wait till the storm subsided. It is possible that he is never nervous; it is impossible that such a reception from his fellow-citizens should not have moved him; he did in fact show some traces of emotion in his opening sentences. A part of his speech is here given:—

“No man could rise to address such an assembly as this without a feeling of grave responsibility and of some natural emotion, and in my case these feelings are deepened by the sense of personal obligation under which I lie to this great constituency, which has ever shown to me a generous consideration and which has conferred upon me the highest honour in its gift.”

First  
Speech to  
Constituents.  
June 28th,  
1876.

“It is not without reluctance that I relinquish the office I have held for nearly three years, and which I shall ever hold to be one of the most honourable to which a citizen can aspire. Local government is increasing in importance while Imperial is diminishing, for it is not a time when to follow the fortunes of the Liberal party in Parliament would be likely to bring distinction on the politician. . . . What is the underlying principle of Birmingham Liberalism? It is that we trust the people, that we have a firm confidence in their good sense and patriotism, and if the greatest good of the greatest number be, as I believe it to be, the chief end of government, then we think that the people best understand their own affairs and are best able to secure their highest interests, without at the same time doing injustice

to any class or section. Mistakes of the people are less dangerous to the commonwealth," said Mr. Chamberlain impressively, "than the mistakes of a minority or of a privileged class."

He then declared his opinions on Licensing Reform, Education, and Disestablishment.

Mr. Chamberlain's attitude on the last of these questions **Disestablishment.** has so often been asserted to be the natural outcome of his position as a Dissenter that his pronouncement on his real views is worth careful attention :—

"I have never been content to argue this question as if it were a squabble between Dissenters and Churchmen, nor have I ever attacked the religious work of the Church or the personal work of those who preach her doctrines; but I have maintained, and I do maintain, that it is an institution which divides the land into hostile camps upon all social, educational, and political questions, and that it converts what ought to be a religious organ into the machine of a party opposed to progress.

"The fact is, that union between Church and State is separation between Church and people.

"One reason why working men do not go to church may be sought for in the fact that workmen are compelled to look upon the Church as their opponent in all the political reforms upon which they have set their hearts. . . .

"You might almost think that a new Act of Uniformity had been passed which made Conservatism the fortieth Article and the possession of Liberal principles a disqualification for Holy Orders. . . .

"What the Liberals want is to secure better representation, **Ultimate Aim of Liberalism.** to promote temperance, to secure the prevalence of education, and remove the great causes of social discord and the great obstacles to political progress, to provide food and comforts for millions of their fellow-countrymen. Those are the constitutional objects which we seek by means as constitutional as those by which our opponents try to defeat them. . . .

"England is said to be the paradise of the rich; we have to take care that it is not suffered to become the purgatory of the poor."

In conclusion he said :—

“ I could wish that we could settle our political differences without this personal bitterness, and for myself, if I have ever attacked an opponent when I might have contented myself with condemning his opinions, if ever I have unjustly imputed motives when I should have been satisfied with blaming actions which I disapprove, I hope I shall never be ashamed to express the regret which I ought to feel.

“ On the other hand, no hope of escaping obloquy shall ever cause me to abate one jot of honest conviction or to refrain from frank and free expression of it. ‘ If,’ says the proverb, ‘ you turn aside to throw a stone at every cur that barks, you will never get to the end of your journey.’ I am your representative. I have other work to do than to notice ungenerous criticism from political foes.

“ No man can sit for Birmingham who does not represent the working classes, which form four-fifths of this great constituency. I therefore refuse altogether to consider myself, in any sense, a representative of middle-class interests. . . . But the working classes have much to gain from legislation, and although I do not believe their interests to be antagonistic to those of other classes—because the welfare and security of the whole depend upon the contentment and happiness of every part—yet I share their hopes and aspirations, and I claim until you withdraw it the privilege to speak on their behalf, and in their name and your name to plead their cause.”

Throughout this book, when Mr. Chamberlain’s popularity is referred to, it is not intended to imply either that his actions obtained universal approval or that in Birmingham itself there were not men opposed to him both politically and personally. All that is meant is, that during the period under review, the great preponderance of feeling, especially in Birmingham, was in his favour ; and during his municipal career more particularly, this popularity was not the outcome of loyalty to the chief of a party, but was largely a sentiment of liking for the man.

He was probably at this time better known personally

to his constituents than any other Member of Parliament has been, unless "Labour" candidates be excepted.

The following letter shows, however, that there were among the ratepayers those who could not forget that "twopence on the improvement rate is a gigantic tangible fact":—

"DEAR SIR,—

"You are better known as the 'Mad Mayor of Birmingham'! Very appropriate too! You certainly can't have common sense! You are going on involving the town in expense just to pleasure your own fancies and a lot of addle-headed Town Councillors that, like a flock of sheep, will agree to anything.

"The ratepayers must be *fools* to let you go any further. You want to borrow more money for improvements. It is a disgrace! An Englishman's house *used* to be his castle. Now it is filled with spies on the plea of sanitary inspection. It is a disgrace to them who call themselves rulers of this scandalous town!"

In July, 1876, Mr. Chamberlain took his seat in the House.

Entry into  
the House.  
July, 1876.

The ceremony of introduction was to be performed by Mr. Bright and Mr. Cowen, the Member for Newcastle, an admirer of the new Member for Birmingham. Many friends came forward to congratulate Mr. Chamberlain, among others being Mr. Morley (who was, however, not in the House at the time). But before taking the oath an incident occurred which was of course commented on, and over which the *Birmingham Town Crier* made merry.

Mr. Chamberlain, new to the etiquette of the House, was unaware that he might not wear his hat until he was actually sworn in, and after prayers were over he promptly put it on. Consternation reigned: surely Mr. Bright would explain matters to his young colleague. But Mr. Bright either did not see what had happened or took no notice. Would some one write the offender a line? No one did. Whispers ran up and down the benches: would he incur the wrath of Mr. Speaker? Presently one of the doorkeepers came in

with a message for the new Member, and when, with perfect deliberation, a few moments later the hat was removed, the House breathed again.

The *Town Crier*, in the "Diary of a New Member," gives the supposed impressions of Mr. Chamberlain on his entry into the House :—

"*July 15.*—Kept my hat on in the House when I went there. Other people did the same. It seems to be the only sign of difference between the Members and door-keepers. Seems I did wrong; you don't wear your hat until you are sworn. Felt strongly disposed to swear off-hand; but there is a form provided, which you are obliged to follow. It is longer than it need be, and not so expressive as a voluntary form might be made. Mr. Bright and Mr. Cowen took me up to see the Speaker. . . . We shook hands, and I went through the formality of the oath. Then I took my seat, put on my hat, and felt as if I had been in the House for a twelvemonth.

"The first impression one gets from the House is a desire to get away as soon as possible. The smoking-room is nice, and you can go out on the terrace and look at the penny steamboats; so far as I can see, a good many Members would be better employed if they did nothing else. Instead, they come up and vote the wrong way. You vote by going out of the House into a long passage, chatting to anybody you find there, and then you go through a door and are ticked off like a lot of sheep, and then you go back into the House again and presently repeat the performance.

"*Legislation involves a lot of walking. . . .*

"I never had any idea till now how tiresome speeches might be. Hitherto they have seemed delightful, but perhaps there is a difference between making them and listening to them. . . . The whole thing is a weariness and a bore. This Education Bill, for instance. A *League* meeting is the thing to freshen them. . . . If it wasn't for the smoking-room, the place would be intolerable. I wonder how Dixon stood it so long. Bright is different; he has been here so many years that he likes it. Quite an acquired taste, like truffles. I haven't said anything yet about the great people up here. For one thing it isn't so very easy to find them."

It is curious that Mr. H. W. Lucy, in the life attached to his authorised edition of Mr. Chamberlain's speeches, should give the wrong date for his maiden speech, remarking that—

**First Speech in the House. August 4th, 1876.**

“with a wisdom which might be more widely imitated, he did not till his second Session attempt to catch the Speaker's eye. He was content to watch the House, learn its ways, and make it familiar with his unobtrusive presence before he claimed its attention as a participator in the debate. The first speeches in the House of Commons of men who subsequently make themselves famous are matters of enduring interest.”

No excuse will therefore be needed for quoting a considerable part of that speech which was really Mr. Chamberlain's maiden effort, though it was delivered on August 4th, 1876, on Lord Sandon's Education Bill, and not February 17th, 1877, on the Prisons Bill.

During the discussion on the payment of fees by the guardians, Mr. Chamberlain rose, saying that he had so recently come into the House that he felt reluctant to trespass on its time, being of opinion that he should best show his respect for the assembly he was so proud to enter by refraining from addressing it while inexperienced in its forms and practice.

“But the question under consideration is one in which I am so deeply interested, and one in which I have taken so considerable a part personally, that it seems to me it would be scarcely honest if I were to remain silent and refrain from stating to the House the opinions which I have formed upon this subject.

“The noble lord (Lord Sandon) who has just sat down said that we were, he hoped, about to arrive at a satisfactory settlement of the question. I fear that the House of Commons cannot be congratulated on any such result.

“Allusion has been made in the course of the debate to the Birmingham School Board, to whom, I hope, Members will at least give credit for honesty of purpose and real

educational zeal. As the majority of that Board had endeavoured to enforce compulsory attendance before any board schools were built, it had become necessary to pay the fees of the children of poor parents at denominational schools, but the feeling against this course was so strong—hundreds of people declaring they would rather be distrained upon than pay the ‘New Church Rate’—that even the denominational majority of the Board were unwilling to enforce it, and provision for payment in those cases was made by voluntary subscriptions.”

Mr. Chamberlain then explained how, under the second Board, of which he had been Chairman, the system was adopted, of complete separation of religious and secular education—“a very different thing from a system of purely secular education.” He denied indignantly that this plan was, as had been said, “to the eternal disgrace of Birmingham.” Never had so complete, so thorough and universal a measure of religious teaching been given to their children before.

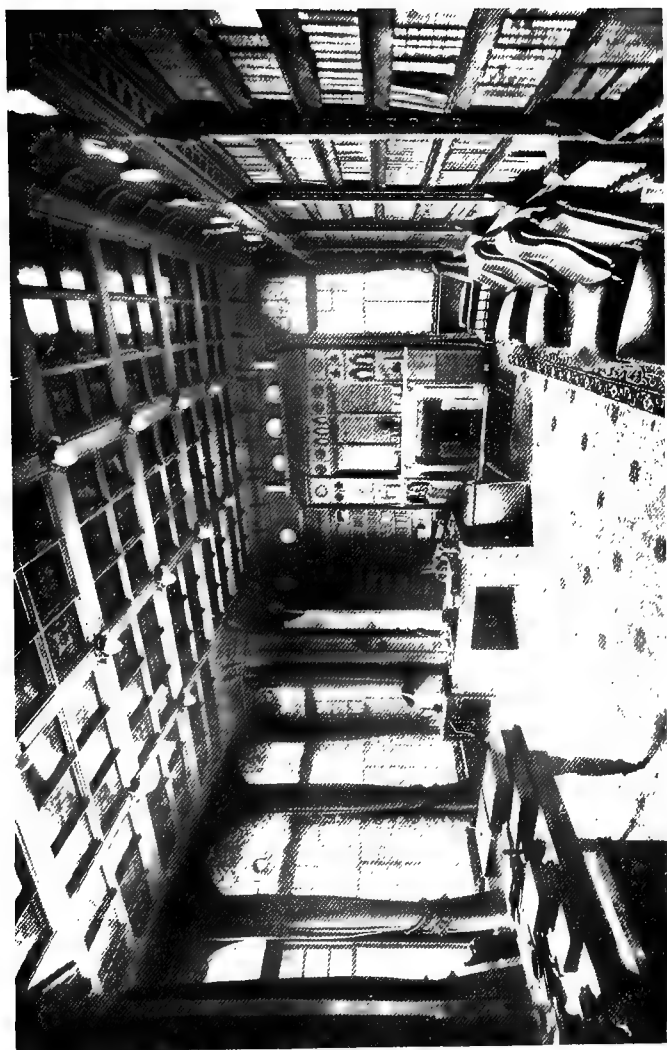
“‘The rights of conscience’ was fast becoming (as Mr. Forster had in 1873 made it) a geographical expression. In the rural districts there are ten thousand to twelve thousand parishes with only Church schools, and this rate now asked for, is for the maintenance of their doctrines, not as the old church rate was, merely for the maintenance of the fabric of the church.”

In conclusion he said that the amendment raised so important a principle that it would justify even a factious opposition on the part of honourable Members on his side of the House, and would lead to future opposition detrimental to the cause of education. He thanked the House for having listened to him so attentively.

The Member following—Mr. Hopwood—referred to the able and temperate speech they had listened to from the Member for Birmingham, whose ability had been so fully shown in a speech which must have been listened to with attention and pleasure by all who heard it.

“Mr. Chamberlain’s speech was acknowledged to be one of





*Photo by*

THE LIBRARY, HIGHBURY.  
Specially taken (by permission) for this book.

*[Draycot,*



the successes of the season," said another critic, and it was of course hailed with great satisfaction in Birmingham.

The second speech (on the Prisons Bill) was a protest against transferring the control of prisons to the Imperial Government. Mr. Chamberlain confessed himself divided between admiration for the object

Speech on  
Prisons Bill.  
February,  
1877.

which the Home Secretary (Mr. Cross) had in view and dissatisfaction with regard to the means by which he hoped to accomplish his end. "If you save a hundred pounds," he said, "out of the local rates, it is not much if it entails on the Imperial Government an expenditure of double that amount." He had had considerable experience of Government contracts, and while he had always found Government officials very civil, "no system could be devised which was less competent to secure the best article at the lowest price; it would not compare with the advantages possessed by local authorities possessing multifarious sources of information." Now, the financial arrangements of the prisons were to be taken from the control of the Town Councils: this was a blow to the dignity of local government. The visiting justices might make recommendations, but the local authorities would have no power to order the work to be done. Why did not the Government take over the reformatories and industrial schools also? He protested against the "Radical and revolutionary proceedings of the Government."

The "first appearance" of the Radical Member for Birmingham had been looked for with interest, not unmingled with trepidation, by some Members of the House. They had been prepared to see a man with the roughness of a miner and the dress of a Hyde Park agitator. Sir Walter Barttelot had evidently evolved some fancy picture, says Mr. H. W. Lucy—

"for his surprise at seeing the junior Member for Birmingham in a coat and even a waistcoat, and in hearing him speak very good English in a quiet and undemonstrative manner, was undisguised. . . . Moreover, the Radical wore, not spectacles (with tin or brass rims, as Felix Holt would un-

doubtedly have done, if his sight had been impaired), but an *eyeglass*. Positively an eyeglass! Surprise deepened when the Radical, in a low, clear, admirably pitched voice, and with a manner self-possessed without being self-assertive, proceeded to discuss the Prisons Bill on the same lines as Sir Walter himself. . . . At the close of the speech, Sir Walter, overcome with surprise, found himself shaking hands with this Radical."

As Mr. Chamberlain had spoken in the House some seven months previously, this picture is somewhat overdrawn, and Sir Walter's surprise rather belated. The new Member's slim, well-set-up figure, his faultless dress, precise speech, clear, well-modulated voice, came as a surprise to many who had assumed that the Radical Member for the most Radical of towns could not possibly be a gentleman as regards the external man, whatever he might be "at heart."

As a debater he at once made his mark: a quiet humour, far removed from that of the "funny man," showed itself; his sarcastic vein was at first rigidly controlled, while his grasp of the essential points of his case, the clever arrangement of his arguments, the lucidity and point of his illustrations, combined with his natural action and pleasant voice, attracted unusual attention and favourable comment. It was evident that the junior Member for Birmingham would always command a hearing.

Six months after his entry into Parliamentary life, *Vanity Fair* published a cartoon of Mr. Chamberlain, by "*Vanity Fair*," describing him as—

"a devout Radical Philistine; *yet* he is gentle-mannered, well-read, and a careful writer; a welcome guest, an excellent host, a successful candidate for a position in smart society, and therefore" [surely a strange "therefore"] "undoubtedly destined to play a leading part whenever the Liberals shall next appear upon the stage in power. He has already made himself known for somebody in Parliament, and although, having but delicate health and not being a born orator, it is a question whether he will make for himself a great

position in the House, it is certain that he will make himself an excellent position in other people's houses."

Thus early did he receive the approbation of "smart society," according to the verdict of one of its leading journals. "The delicate health," however, must have been a pretty journalistic fiction. Mr. Chamberlain, to use the old-fashioned phrase, "enjoys excellent health,"—with the exception of an occasional attack of gout—though he has sustained a heavier strain through bereavement in private life, and by reason of political and personal attacks in public life, than almost any other statesman of the last fifty years. But his appearance in earlier years was that of a delicate man: the thin white face, with its sharp lines, and the slight figure, did not give an impression of physical strength.

Mr. Chamberlain passed the summer vacation of 1875 in a tour in Lapland and Sweden, an account of which he published in the *Fortnightly* for December, 1876. Together with Mr. Jesse Collings he spent some weeks visiting a little-known district and "roughing it" considerably.

The account of the journey is interesting, and he was evidently much impressed by the scenery and the beauty of the Swedish capital. A still stronger impression was made by the extreme isolation and dreariness of the scattered peasant life in remote villages.

The object of the journey was to investigate the Swedish system of the municipal control of drinking houses, usually known as the "Gothenburg System" from its successful adoption by the town of Gothenburg. Modifications of the plan are in force elsewhere, but Mr. Chamberlain desired to see for himself how it worked out in Sweden, where it originated, and whether the evils which the Swedes hoped to combat successfully were analogous to those which English legislators had to combat in their own country.

After his visit to Sweden, he laid his proposals before the

"Six Hundred" in November, 1876. In his speech he lays down three propositions:—

"Six  
Hundred"  
and the  
Scheme.

"1. The absolute suppression of drinking is impossible.

"2. The evils of drinking will become permanent, and perhaps increase, unless we can secure some better regulation of drinking.

"3. This regulation can only be efficiently secured by entrusting the trade to the control of local authorities.

"I should like to say that I came to this conclusion a long while ago, and before I ever heard of what is called the 'Gothenburg System.' . . . I want you. . . to consider the resolution which I submit to you independently in the first instance, at all events, of anything you may have heard about the Gothenburg system; because, bear in mind, that an experiment in one country can never be an absolutely certain guide as to results in another country."

The main advantages of the new system were that all drink-shops were in the hands of a public body instead of those of private owners; the number of such places could be at once enormously reduced; the regulations for the conduct of public-houses would be more strictly enforced; the liquors sold would be pure; by removing vested interests further regulation—such as Sunday closing—which those interests oppose would become possible; and closing on election days would be practicable. Moreover, the political interests of the trade would disappear. Further, all extraneous temptation, in the way of "music and mirrors, glass and gilding," to excessive drinking would be removed.

The means whereby these reforms would be carried out were simple. Parliament was to be asked to empower the local authorities to buy up the licensed houses within their district. Compensation at a rate fixed by Parliament was to be given; the number of houses was to be determined proportionately to the population, beyond which it could not be increased, though the authorities might reduce this number; the management of the houses was to be in the hands of salaried

servants appointed by the Corporation; their position was dependent on good conduct and an orderly house; their remuneration was in no way increased by the alcoholic liquors they sold, but they were to have a commission on the sale of food and non-intoxicating drinks, so that it would be to their interest to diminish the sale of intoxicants and increase the sale of food.

The profits might be variously applied. Some proposed that they should be used for the multiplication of parks, museums, and free libraries; others that they should be paid over to the Imperial Government as the tax on alcoholic drink now is. As the plan was finally shaped they were not to be devoted to the relief of rates, so that the ratepayers could never have any interest in the increase of the trade.

The public-houses themselves were to be plain, clean, homely, unadorned buildings. The presence of children, of gamblers, and of prostitutes would not be allowed, and the hours of closing would be earlier and the hours of opening later than at present.

Was not this a Utopian dream? Apparently not in Sweden.

Mr. Chamberlain next recounted some of his Swedish experiences, explaining at the same time that these **Some Gothenburg experiences.** regulations had so far been applied to spirit-shops only; and as the supply of beer was still practically unrestricted, the results were not as good as might reasonably be expected in England, where beershops would also be included.

"We were in a house at nine o'clock at night—just before closing, for people are very early in Gothenburg and go to bed at nine o'clock—and it was crowded with working men tossing off their glasses of spirits, and I am bound to confess we saw some drunken men among them. But we did not see any drunken men supplied with drink. They were not drunk as we call drunk here—not drunk and disorderly, or drunk and incapable; but they were quiet drunkards. We saw these men walking to the bar and

asking for further supplies, and in all cases they were refused, and in two or three cases they were put out of the house and told to go home.

"Well, after we had looked on for some time I said to the Chief of the Police, who accompanied me: 'I have seen enough of this class of house. I want now to go to the worst in Gothenburg.' He said: 'This is the worst house—this is the very worst house in Gothenburg.'

"It is close to the quays, it is frequented, not by ordinary working men, but by 'lumpers' who assist in unloading the ships—by men of the very lowest class—and it used to be in former times a den of disorder, a constant scene of debauchery and riot; it was the haunt of prostitutes; it was as well known to the seafaring population under a cant name as the worst den in Rotterdam.

"I assure you that that house when I saw it was more respectable than dozens of houses in Birmingham, London, and other large towns. The consequence of this improved character of the houses is to be found in the amount of crime in the town, which is now below the average, and chiefly made up of comparatively venial offences, the more serious offences being almost unknown."

Mr. Chamberlain then answered the various objections which were urged against the plan. The most forcible one, which was felt by many ardent temperance reformers, was, that they did not conscientiously see how they could (through their municipal representatives) have anything to do with the sale of alcoholic liquors at all.

"But," said Mr. Chamberlain, "you cannot get rid of the responsibility by shutting your eyes. . . . As a matter of fact, you are deriving a great portion of the revenue of this country from the profits of the trade *at the present time*; *you are undertaking the responsibility of its control and regulation*, and the question is whether you will do that efficiently or in the perfunctory way in which it is now carried on.

"We may, I believe, lessen the evils connected with this traffic, and I say that is a worthy and a noble object.

"I remember a speech attributed to Mr. Spurgeon, who was taken to task for some unconventional manner or language in the pulpit, and who said in reply: 'If I could



save souls by standing on my head, I would always preach in that position.' Well, I say, *if I could save half the drunkards in Birmingham—if I could relieve them from the consequences of the vice to which they are a prey—if I could increase to that extent the happiness and prosperity of the community by turning publican, I would put on an apron and serve behind a bar to-morrow, and I should say I could not possibly engage in a nobler or more religious work,*" [that is, of saving half the drunkards in Birmingham.]

"We must not expect," he added, "an Act of Parliament to make men sober, but then on the other hand that is only half the question. We must take care that an Act of Parliament does not make men drunk."

It is to be noted that when this speech of Mr. Chamberlain's is quoted, all the words in italics are left out. Immediately after its delivery, the cartoonists were busy depicting him as a barman.

Early in January, 1877, Mr. Chamberlain proposed to the Town Council that the Corporation should apply for powers to try this system of licensing in Birmingham, and his motion was carried by forty votes to ten. In February he wrote another article on the subject of "Municipal Public-Houses," and in this Session introduced a resolution asking for a trial of the Gothenburg system in England.

Seventeen years later (1894), at the Grosvenor House **Later Opinion on Temperance Reform. 1894.** meeting in support of public-house reform, he defined his first and his final position on this matter. In 1877 he had given evidence before the Lords' Committee, and as one of the results of that Committee various recommendations were made to Parliament, one being that this scheme should have a fair trial.

"In 1877 I failed—that is to say, I failed to bring Parliament round to my opinion, and although I have not, in the slightest degree, had my confidence in the soundness of the principles which were then laid down shaken or destroyed, yet I must confess I have allowed the matter to slumber. . . .

"Why have I left this reform so long in abeyance? Well, because of the hostility of the Temperance party. That is the whole secret of the matter. . . . Until wiser counsels prevail among the Temperance party, I fear that the history of temperance agitation will continue to be a dismal record of the wrecks of well-meant efforts and promising experiments. . . .

"I earnestly entreat them [the members of the United Kingdom Alliance] to reconsider the policy of that great organisation. I say that, during my time, I know of no organisation either political or social, which with so much money has done so little good. . . .

"When I made my proposal (1877), which was that this matter should be carried through by a municipality, there were many objections which were directed exclusively with a view to the municipality having anything to do with the matter. All these objections fall to the ground in the case of the Bishop of Chester's scheme, according to which a trust instead of a municipality would take charge of the subject. . . .

"I approve of the Bishop's plan, as perhaps I should be also willing to approve of any reasonable modification [of the scheme].

"Since 1877 all the reflection, all the consideration, I have been able to give to this matter has only strengthened my conviction that here, and here alone, lies the reasonable and hopeful opportunity of making a great reduction in the intemperance which we deplore."

Such a scheme of Temperance Reform was one of Mr. Chamberlain's earliest dreams, it still represents his mature views on what is perhaps the most important and most pressing question of English domestic legislation. From the material point of view alone, the statesman who succeeds in carrying a good temperance measure will have done much to enable us to regain and to hold that dominant position in the industrial world which we look upon as necessary for the maintenance of English supremacy. In the event of success the reduction in our bill for the support of the criminal and pauper population alone would pay for the cost of the experiment, and possibly the income wanted

by Mr. Chamberlain in order to provide old age pensions might be drawn from the savings thus effected.

The speech on the Gothenburg question was Mr. Chamberlain's first big effort in the House. He spoke for nearly an hour, and "on rising was loudly cheered," while "loud and continuous cheering from both sides of the House" greeted the close of the speech, which was listened to with marked attention, and fifty votes were recorded in favour of his resolution.

From this time his position in the House was assured. The following description of it, dated from an article in the *Birmingham Post* by "an Independent Member," shows the impression made after his third speech in the House.

"He had some notes, but he hardly ever used them. Before he had spoken twenty sentences, Mr. Gladstone leaned forward to see and hear the speaker. Cross (the Home Secretary) took notes, and Sir Stafford [Northcote] was drawn into a sitting position, and sat upright. There were no epigrams, no personalities, no desperate attempts to be funny. It was a calm, serious argument, leading to a level and logical conclusion. From end to end it was the work of a man who felt the subject too important for wit and laughter, and who laid himself out to convince rather than to secure applause.

"Mr. Chamberlain must be credited with having thoroughly learnt the art of oratory. His voice is perfect; his articulation distinct. His action, too, is good; he knows what to do with his hands. I am not sure that when speaking he was not wearing spectacles or an eyeglass of some kind. . . . If he does, let him be earnestly counselled not to use anything of the sort while speaking. It is of the greatest importance that the audience should see the orator's eyes. Barring this, his action is good—and heaven only knows what we have to suffer from distorted action in this House!

"Except Mr. Bright, Mr. Gladstone, and Roebuck, I cannot call to mind another Member of the House who understands practically what rhetoric is, and yet a man is born to speak in public, just as truly as he is born to sing in public.

"It is pleasant to find that Mr. Chamberlain trusts little

to that 'inspiration of the moment' to which is due so much of the watery flood which drowns the House. He had evidently prepared carefully, and yet there were passages in his speech which could not have been more spontaneous had they occurred to him on the spot, notably when he protested against Mr. Lowe's theory that municipal governments could not be trusted with patronage.

"Of course the central excellence of the speech was its earnestness, because Sir Wilfrid Lawson's treatment has, unfortunately, made this subject a theme for continual jokes and laughter. Here at last was one more human being in the House—a man, not a mask. Who knows what nine out of ten of the Members are really meaning or thinking? This sincerity will ultimately secure success. Mr. Chamberlain has made his mark—he must take one precaution, and be careful not to repeat the achievement of Tuesday too often. Once or twice in a Session is enough."

## CHAPTER XIII

### *ORGANISING THE LIBERAL PARTY*

1877—1880

DISSOLUTION OF NATIONAL EDUCATION LEAGUE 1877—FEDERATION OF LIBERAL ASSOCIATIONS—MR. GLADSTONE'S VISIT TO BIRMINGHAM, MAY 1877—FORTNIGHTLY ARTICLES "THE NEW POLITICAL ORGANISATION" AND "THE CAUCUS"—MR. CHAMBERLAIN AT ROCHDALE—JOHN BRIGHT'S TRIBUTE—FRANCIS SCHNADHORST.

"THE question of popular education is rapidly becoming the line of demarcation between parties and the test of true Liberalism in this and every other European country," wrote Mr. Chamberlain in his article on "Free Schools" (January, 1877). In this he lays down the proposition that compulsory education must be followed by free education, if the former is not to become a sham and to cause injustice in the many cases in which the exercise of compulsion tended simply to drive the children into denominational schools.

"The efforts of all lovers of justice and of all friends of education must now be directed to the establishment of the principle that representation shall go hand in hand with taxation, and that no grant of national or local funds shall be made to any school a majority of whose managing body does not consist of representatives elected by the district for the purpose."

This, then, was to be the work of the Liberal party—to secure this representation, and to fight for free schools.

The circular issued in 1877 which dissolved the National

Education League also suggests that the Liberal party, when organised, should undertake this work :—

“They feel that the great question of education cannot long remain in the position determined by the Act of last Session. The Liberal organisations, especially in the boroughs, are now being perfected by the establishment of Liberal Associations on a representative basis, and a practical step toward rendering them better available for general political work has already been taken by the resolution of the Birmingham Liberal Association to call a meeting of delegates, with a view to uniting the various organisations in one Federation. To such a union the education question may properly and safely be committed for consideration as one of the features of the Liberal programme.”

The Federation of the Liberal Associations throughout the country took place in May, 1877, in Birmingham when Mr. Gladstone visited the town for the first time, if we except the hour he used to spend there on his way to school waiting for the coach. A great reception was prepared for him; he was to be escorted by a procession of delegates and by companies of men (five hundred from each ward) all the way from New Street Station to Mr. Chamberlain's residence in Edgbaston. But the enthusiasm of the people outside the station was such that they broke the barriers, swept aside the police, and surrounded the carriage in which Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone, accompanied by Mr. Chamberlain and his daughter, were sitting. They pressed forward to shake hands with the great leader, and one, more excited than the rest, patted Mr. Gladstone on the back. Some sort of processional order was at length attained, and the cavalcade made its way to Edgbaston, halting a moment at Mr. Dixon's house, where his wife and daughter welcomed the distinguished visitors.

In the evening the great meeting in Bingley Hall took place, when nearly thirty thousand men assembled to hear Mr. Gladstone, and few who were there

Gladstone's  
Visit.  
May 31st, 1877.

Meeting in  
Bingley Hall.

are likely to forget it. It was said to be the largest audience ever gathered together to hear one man speak. At five o'clock the ticket-holders began to take their seats; at six the doors admitting to the free part of the hall were thrown open, and the cheers and the noise as the people rushed in from all sides at once and "swarmed" up the supports in the gallery almost to the roof was something never to be forgotten. The heat and the crushing were indescribable. Behind huge barricades men were wedged in solid masses of a thousand or more; the barricades converted the hall into vast pens; the roar of the incoming multitude, the trampling of feet, the scuffling, were not unlike the sounds to be heard outside a wild-beast show. Glass had to be taken out of the roof to admit more air, and as the stifling, gasping crowd eagerly watched, the workman seated himself in the aperture he had just made, blocking for the moment the current of air. A howl of anger went up from the hall, which, though only meant as a warning "to come down out of that," was horribly suggestive of what the wrath of those excited men penned up below might mean.

They were separated by breast-high palisading from a long thin line of seat-holders right down the body of the hall. Stout as this protection was, even before the meeting began it was seen to sway under the attacks made upon it by the rushes of the men within. Considerable anxiety was depicted on many faces; some seat-holders even relinquished their seats, for ladies and even children were in the reserved places, with insecure barriers on both sides of them. Had these come down, a frightful rush from both sides must have taken place. At one moment a clergyman stood up on a chair, shouting, "Take the women and children out." A yell of derision followed: "Yah! Yer wus than a woman yerself!" At last great beams were brought in, and the barrier was shored up, policemen standing against it all the way down the hall.

As the meeting went on the crush became serious; one great grimy head after another which had been looking over

the barriers disappeared, and one burly form after another had to be lifted over and laid in the gangway of the reserved seats as man after man fainted. Presently they recovered, scrambled to their feet, and stood white and shaken, but intent to cheer at every opportunity as the speeches went on.

Delegates from nearly a hundred Liberal Associations were present, and the organiser of the whole, Francis Schnadhorst, (the Secretary) with other officials of the Liberal Association and the Mayor and Corporation were on the platform. There were very few "big guns." The meeting was a practical demonstration of the power of the people, and perhaps not less so of the enormous responsibility which lay in the hands of the men who could influence this great instrument for good or evil.

Great as was the excitement beforehand, it was but a breeze compared with the hurricane of enthusiasm which swept the meeting when the Liberal leader stood before them, accompanied by Mr. Chamberlain, Dr. Dale, and other favourite speakers. For once Dale, a man almost as popular as their junior Member, was not welcome. "Sit down, sit down, and let's hear Gladstone!" was shouted from all parts of the hall, and scarcely had the audience patience to listen to the preliminary proceedings.

Mr. Gladstone's reception was one which he could never forget, and when he came again in 1888 it must have been saddening to Mr. Chamberlain, to reflect how far they had drifted asunder since they stood together that May evening to receive the finest welcome which could be offered to any man by his fellow-citizens.

Mr. Gladstone's speech was concerned with the development of the Eastern question and with the rejection of his famous resolutions in the House of Commons. The country believed itself to be drifting into a war of intervention on behalf of the tyrannous Turk against the oppressed Christian, partly through hatred of Russia, partly by reason of Disraeli's calculating obstinacy. Both the conscience and the sentiment of the country (which are not always allied) were dead



against such a war, and Mr. Chamberlain had already recorded his protest in the House in unmistakable terms, saying that there was still a chance of maintaining friendly relations with the Czar and circumventing Turkey, while, by strengthening the Greek kingdom, a certain measure of protection against Russian aggression would be obtained.

Mr. Chamberlain's speech did not deal with the Eastern question, but proposed a federation of the Liberal strength of the kingdom, in which "all Liberal Associations founded on the principle of popular election should be included." The National Liberal Federation was intended "to give the opinion of the people full and direct expression in framing and supporting the policy of the Liberal party. Public agitation hitherto had confined itself to preventing mischief; now they would make a new departure and see if it could not shape a new policy, as well as defeat an ignoble one." The Liberal creed was "Progress," and they could not stand still very long without ceasing to be Liberals. The new programme was still "Free Schools, Free Land, Free Church"—a programme for the people.

Mr. Gladstone worked hard during this visit, and on the following day, having inspected the Small Arms Factory and shaken hands with many of the workmen, he drove to the Bristol Road Board School, was conducted over the buildings, was cheered by the children in the playground, and received an address from the "Six Hundred," who had assembled there. Thence he went to the Town Hall and met the Mayor and chief officials of the town, who were anxious to welcome him in their historic hall, of which he had heard so much. It looked cold and empty after the crowd in Bingley Hall the previous night, but Mr. Gladstone, who, in spite of a long morning's work, refused to sit during the proceedings, showed the greatest interest in everything and paid a warm tribute to the municipal work and workers of Birmingham.

The day ended with a great banquet given by the Mayor (Mr. Alderman Baker), at which Mr. Bright was present and

returned thanks for "The Borough Members." He contrived to chaff Mr. Chamberlain on his insatiable activity, and slyly remarked that things did not move nearly fast enough in the House to suit his young colleague. "I can see Mr. Chamberlain is looking at me through his glass, only waiting till I have finished to get up and protest against what I am saying."

Mr. Chamberlain did not lose his opportunity. With somewhat more earnestness than the occasion seemed to need, he pointed out the solid agreement which existed between himself and Mr. Bright. "My Right Honourable colleague," he said, "hates programmes. I entirely agree with him, and heartily approve of the programme he has just set before you." As for his work as Mayor, he avowed that he had never worked harder before or since, and if the opportunity of effectively serving the borough in Parliament were not afforded him, he would return and dwell once more with his own people.

Thus ended a memorable visit, and thus Mr. Chamberlain found himself after less than a year of Parliamentary life a man of note in the eyes of the Liberal party. His reputation was no longer local. The presence of the Liberal leader had sanctioned the extension of the political organisation which was to dominate the whole Liberal party, and of this organisation Mr. Chamberlain was now the recognised leader. In two articles in the *Fortnightly* he expounded its methods and its aims.

"The true significance of Mr. Gladstone's visit to Birmingham," said Mr. Chamberlain in "The New Political Organisation," "has been seized by the great majority of those who are interested in the matter. . . . He delivered a great speech on the Eastern question, and no attempt was made to commit him to any public expression of opinion on the general policy of the Liberal party. . . . The ex-leader of the Liberal party and the most popular statesman of our time has expressed his sympathy with the efforts of those who are trying to retrieve the fallen fortunes of the Liberal

"The New  
Political  
Organisa-  
tion" and  
"The  
Caucus."



*Photo by]*

THE HALL, HIGHBURY.

Specially taken (by permission) for this book.



party ; and he has frankly admitted the claims of the Radicals—the men who are in earnest [as he himself had defined them to be]—to recognition and fair consideration in the party councils. . . .

“It is the confident expectation of the promoters of the new organisation that it will result in greater definiteness being given to the aims and objects of the party.”

If the view of the leaders (that inaction was inevitable and politic for the present) was the right one, then Mr. Chamberlain sarcastically observes : “Our occupation is gone ; there is no question of a programme, no need for a leader ; all that is required is the service of a political charwoman or two who will keep the dust from the furniture and the flies from the chandelier.”

But the leaders were wrong. The rank and file had positively dragged their officers into action in the case of the Merchant Shipping Bill, the two Slavery Circulars, and the Burials Bill. As for the Eastern question, it was the people who decided against war with Russia. For three months the Liberal leaders had refrained from challenging the action of the Government, while every day we were drifting nearer to war. The inaction of the leaders had been due in great measure to a mistaken impression of the mind of the country.

“It will not be the least of the objects of the new Federation to prevent from time to time the possibility of such misconceptions, and to reflect accurately the opinions and the wishes of the majority of the Liberals for the information of all who are responsible for party management.”

A formal programme was expressly precluded from the constitution of the new Federation,—

“since the only qualification required from its members is that they shall be representatives freely chosen by the popular vote of all Liberals in their respective districts. . . .

“The managing committees are elected by public meetings annually called in each ward, and open to every Liberal resi-

dent. Thus the constituency of the association is the whole body of Liberals in the borough. The divisions which are so often caused by sectional or personal interests are rendered impossible or harmless by the width of the base on which the association rests, and its thoroughly representative character is so well understood that no imputation of individual dictation or management by clique can possibly be sustained. . . .

"It cannot be too strongly insisted on that the Caucus does not make opinion, it only expresses it. . . . It will not turn Conservatives into Liberals or secure for a Liberal minority a representation to which its numbers do not entitle it. . . . If the committees are not really representative. . . the caucus will soon sink into deserved neglect and contempt. . . . All the machinery in the world will not rouse enthusiasm in England, unless there is a solid foundation of genuine and earnest feeling to work upon. . . .

"Resolutions from the Central Committee would be immediately sent to the local associations, with a recommendation to call public meetings and take steps in the support of the proposition.

"If they approve of the suggestion, they will make the necessary arrangements to carry them out, and will no doubt request their Members in Parliament to vote for the motion. But this can only be done if they agree to the recommendations of the central committee. It did not follow that pressure would be put upon a Member if he was unable to comply with the request of his constituents.

"The constituents are not so ungenerous or so unjust as **Individualism** to allow honest differences on certain subjects to **and Party.** outweigh long service and general agreement. . . .

"When individualism is really a virtue and represents original and independent thought and deep conviction, there is no caucus in the world that is powerful enough to repress its legitimate expression or to prevent it from competing for the popular favour."

Eight years later Mr. Chamberlain proved the truth of his own words.

"A party," he defined as "the union, more or less temporary in character, of persons who have important common aims.

It does not exclude the idea of infinite difference and shades of opinion, but it does involve the subordination of these to the primary objects of association, so long as the union subsists at all. In a political party the common aim changes from time to time."

The cardinal and fundamental principles in a robust and vigorous Liberal creed, were—

"a firm faith in the people at large, and a belief that they will in the long run, in spite of many mistakes, find out what is best for themselves with more unerring instinct than their self-appointed philosophers and friends.

"*'The men in earnest'*"—to use Mr. Gladstone's phrase—will not easily accept inglorious ease. Believing that Liberalism has yet a great mission to accomplish—that it is fraught with incalculable possibilities of good, they will not be slow to make their appeal to the people whose interest in political affairs and whose share of power is continually increasing, and they will have good reason to rejoice if organisation, with unity and strength, brings also definiteness of aim to the counsels of the Liberal party."

An attempt was made to show that the new Federation was hostile to Lord Hartington and the official leaders.

"This," said Mr. Chamberlain, "is really nonsense! . . . With the exception of Mr. Gladstone, there is no Liberal leader who would command as much confidence and support as Lord Hartington has secured, and what is sought for is not a change of persons, which might be anything but an improvement, but only the formation and the expression of such an amount of public opinion as would encourage our present leaders to move a little quicker and go a little farther. . . .

"Surely we may strive to impress Lord Hartington with the necessity for giving direction to the labours of the Liberals without having imputed to us disloyalty to our chief, or a reckless eagerness to break up the party."

Mr. Chamberlain's advice was: "Let the Liberal party follow the example of the most earnest, honest and popular

member of the Liberal party [John Bright], and it will not have to complain of ingratitude or indifference."

The agreement between Mr. Bright and his colleague was openly expressed by the older Member on the Rochdale Meeting, November, 1877. occasion of a big meeting at Rochdale in November, 1877, when Bright introduced the junior Member for Birmingham to his fellow-townsmen. Mr. Chamberlain had gone North to explain the new Liberal organisation, which he did at great length, urging that individual opinion under the new system was as valuable as under the old. They must first determine upon which of the pressing reforms they would decide to concentrate their forces. Perhaps if they gave up Disestablishment to please Lord Hartington, and Free Education to please Mr. Forster, and Free Land to please the landowners, they might be allowed as a united party to vote on a Burials Bill, or on one of those harmless measures which excited no opposition because they roused no enthusiasm.

It was evident that Land Reform presented itself at this time to Mr. Chamberlain as the most practical measure. He saw in it two great advantages. Firstly, by throwing more land into the market, the present enhanced cost of it would be reduced, and by giving security to tenants for improvements they would invite an expenditure of capital which would enormously increase the production of food. Herein Mr. Chamberlain saw a chance for the employment of large numbers of the working class, many of whom were out of work owing to the continued commercial depression. Secondly, many urgently needed municipal improvements which affected the very lives of the burgesses could not be carried out owing to the exorbitant prices which, under the present system, it was possible for landowners of property near large towns to demand, if compelled to sell.

It is important to note that Mr. Chamberlain prefaced his views on Free Land by explaining that—

"he was not going to argue for arbitrary interference with just rights of property, but if by means of the ordinary action



of free exchange the old yeoman class could be re-created and a large proportion of the people settled on the land, we should have a guarantee for the security of the State and the general well-being of the population, which must always be wanting so long as the vast majority of the working class were divorced from the soil."

On the conclusion of this speech Mr. Bright paid a generous tribute to Mr. Chamberlain's work both in and out of Parliament :—

"He has done great service in his own town. There, where he is best known, he is best appreciated. To-night you will give him the warm and cordial and enthusiastic welcome which we owe to every man who in a public position earnestly and consistently endeavours, so far as lies in his power, to give good government to the population of this great Empire. This speech will have large influence amongst you, and wherever it is read. I hope every one of us will feel that we have had a great treat, and that we have been taught a great lesson, and it is our duty to follow the advice he has given us and to join with the Liberal party in every part of the kingdom in impressing on the Liberal leaders that there are yet great things to be done."

The perfection of this new political organisation was due to Mr. Francis Schnadhorst, and his rise to power is one of the romances of Birmingham life. It may be said at once that political power is a strange, intangible thing, which does not, in Birmingham, depend on a man's social status or on his wealth. Mr. Schnadhorst began life as a shopkeeper. He was an extremely quiet man of reserved manners and soft, almost timid, speech, with a kindly heart and a great capacity for work. His remarkable power was due to his insight and foresight. He could discern the signs of the times in a marvellous way, and he was an adept at setting the right men to work in the right places. His first work was not political, but was done in connection with the mutual improvement societies

of Birmingham, in which he took the greatest interest. He was a member of Dr. Dale's congregation at Carr's Lane Chapel, and it was Dr. Dale who "discovered" him. When the Liberal Association was in want of a Secretary, he brought forward Mr. Schnadhorst, who began his new work in an unostentatious manner.

Mr. Chamberlain was not slow in realising the ability of his new co-worker, and the excellence of the arrangements made on the occasion of Mr. Gladstone's visit, and the wonderful growth of the Birmingham Liberal Association, and its success in contesting an election, all proved that the right man was in the right place. The name of the Secretary of the Federated Associations of course became widely known. His advice was sought for in all parts of the country to help in organising local branches; in truth, his work was incessant, and more than once he broke down under it.

In 1877 his Birmingham friends subscribed to a testimonial of £1,000, which was presented to him by Mr. Chamberlain, who paid a generous tribute to the value of his services. Later, when Mr. Schnadhorst left the town, he received £10,000 as a testimonial.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *THE MINISTER'S APPRENTICESHIP*

1876—1880

RELATIONS TO LEADERS—FOREIGN AND COLONIAL OPINIONS—SPEECH  
ON FLOGGING—POSITION IN THE HOUSE—GENERAL ELECTION  
OF 1880.

THOSE who aver that Mr. Chamberlain's attitude during the first four years of his Parliamentary life was that of a man anxious for power at any cost—doing all that was possible to minimise the authority of both Mr. Gladstone and Lord Hartington, with the design either of making himself too disagreeable to be ignored, or of gathering round him a body of men who eventually would put him in the place of leader—should remember that if this were his aim, he showed himself a very poor tactician in the means he took to reach his end. He openly avowed his allegiance to the old leaders, and while evidently thinking Mr. Gladstone the better man of the two, was yet quite willing to follow Lord Hartington, provided he would "give direction to the labours of the Liberals." If, like Lord Randolph Churchill, he had wanted to found a Fourth party, he should have renounced both Lord Hartington and Mr. Gladstone.

It was unlikely, almost impossible, that men so essentially different in temperament as Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain—the one an aristocrat trained in the old Whig school, breathing an atmosphere of genial patronage towards the people, whose legislative Providence he felt himself to be; the other a believer in their right to work out their own political redemption, a man impatient of any leader

who did not know his goal and make straight for it—should be at one in the policy to be pursued.

Before he came into personal contact with Lord Hartington, he appears to have been more dissatisfied with him than after he learnt to know him better and to understand his position more fully. In 1874 he “damns him with faint praise,” describing Lord Hartington as “the serious son of a respectable duke”; and later, on one occasion in the House, Mr. Chamberlain was openly at variance with him and publicly withdrew his allegiance from “the late leader of the Liberal party.”

The direct cause of this attack was due to the tone taken by Lord Hartington on the question of flogging in the Army. Mr. Chamberlain fiercely opposed the Government measure, and so effective was his opposition that the Ministers had to promise some modification of the Bill, which at the instigation of Sir W. Barttelot they afterwards tried to escape from. It is said that Lord Hartington, unaware of this disposition to back out, interposed in the discussion and deprecated any further continuance of it on the part of the Radicals, intimating that they ought to be content with the compromise which had been offered to the Government. Mr. Chamberlain “cleverly sprang a mine on the Government” by showing that their Bill would legalise the use of the lash for over a hundred offences, from the most serious ones down to such a trivial one as making a clerical error in accounts. The *Daily News* said that the effect created by the speech was wonderful and not to be resisted by the Government, even with their steady, bucolic, docile majority behind them, and they had to promise that the offences punishable by flogging should be considerably modified.

There was in 1877 and 1878 almost as much division of opinion and bitterness of feeling between the contending parties over the Eastern question as there was at a later date over the Boer War. Mr. Chamberlain believed that Lord Beaconsfield, by thrusting the Russian bogey in the people’s faces, was doing

Foreign and  
Colonial  
Policy. The  
Eastern  
Question.

his best to bring on a second Crimean War and a general European conflagration. The continuance of the terrible misrule which made possible the Bulgarian atrocities, which "Dizzy" is said to have laughed at, was in his opinion a greater evil than the presence of the Russians at Constantinople would be.

"But if," said Dr. Dale, "the Liberals declared that, in their judgment Russia might take Constantinople and India be as safe as before, the Cabinet would charge them with provoking Russia to seize it." When, a fortnight after this was written, Russia was at the very doors of the Turkish capital, the British Lion began to growl. The fleet was first ordered to Constantinople and then countermanded. Lord Carnarvon, the Colonial Secretary, resigned; Lord Derby, the Foreign Secretary, threatened to do likewise; and a little later, the fleet having actually been despatched, he left the Cabinet, making way for Lord Salisbury. A vote of six millions was asked for, and the Reserves were called out. All this took place between January 24th and March 28th, 1878, and from one hour to the next the nation did not know what Lord Beaconsfield meant to do; the only certainty was the uncertainty of his movements—in ordering and countermanding, in working excitement up to fever pitch, and calming down a little when the country flocked to towns' meetings and protested against war. The Prime Minister seemed sure of nothing, except that whatever Russia wanted, we wanted the opposite; whatever move she made, we must make another in the opposite direction.

Having got to this stage, Parliament adjourned for the Easter Recess, and the very next day native troops were ordered from India to Malta. Then indeed a storm broke over Lord Beaconsfield's head which even he could hardly withstand; yet so plausible did he make his case that Lord Hartington's motion condemning the employment of the Indian troops was rejected by 347 to 226 votes.

Mr. Chamberlain, who had always insisted that we ought to take a firm hand with the Porte and that our dog-in-the-

manger policy was directly responsible for the Russo-Turkish War, addressed a significant question to the Government as to the exact cost of bringing the Indian troops to Malta.

Beaconsfield's "Peace with Honour" was hailed with derision by the Liberals, and the Treaty of Berlin was a very unsatisfactory return for a war vote of six millions. We left the reforms in Asia Minor "to the increasing wisdom of the Sultan," though we made ourselves responsible for them at the same time that we guaranteed "the integrity of the Turkish Empire." We took Cyprus for ourselves, but Greece received no accession of territory.

In December, 1879, Parliament was summoned on account of the declaration of war against Afghanistan, a **The Afghan War.** war which may be regarded as one result of our quarrel with Russia; for, jealous lest the Ameer should fall under Russian influence, we insisted on his receiving a British envoy, which, on a consideration of £60,000 a year, he consented to do (May, 1879). But in September the first envoy, Sir Louis Cavagnari, was murdered at Cabul, and Sir Frederick (afterwards Lord) Roberts was sent to avenge him. Mr. Chamberlain, together with the rest of his party, while appreciating Roberts's splendid achievements in the Afghan campaign, believed the policy of the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, to be one of "wanton aggression merely to obtain a scientific frontier," and he opposed the war with all his strength.

His colonial policy at this time was that of the Liberal **South Africa.** party as a whole, and was strongly tinged by John Bright's feeling that domestic legislation was the proper work for a Liberal Government, and that all money expended in extending the bounds of the Empire and all spent on war was tantamount to a robbery of the English poor and the trading classes generally. Consequently he did not approve of the Zulu War. "We should have left the Zulus entirely to themselves," he said. "Our interference was the great primal blunder which produced all the evil."

The plain truth is that few but the colonists understood the colonies in those days. Governments often refused

to listen to the advice of men who had lived all their lives abroad; they were too apt to consider the colonists as grasping and greedy, provoking squabbles upon every conceivable occasion, and then calling upon Great Britain to get them out of their troubles. It is not unlikely that each Government in turn really believed that "it was six of one and half a dozen of the other" in relation to the disputes between natives and colonists and Boers and colonists.

The end of Lord Beaconsfield's term of office was very near at hand when in 1880 he appealed to the country to return a Conservative Government once more. The answer was sharp and decisive. The people were tired of the glittering Imperialism which promised so much and realised so little; they were tired of depression and bad trade and a heavy Budget; they had paid away a solid six millions, and the only tangible gain was an island which no one wanted and the right to hector Turkey. They were tired also of waiting for the county franchise, for free education, and for the era of good trade which many of them devoutly believed would come with a change of Government. Perhaps also they were weary of agitating, of stormy public meetings, of ever-recurring panic of war, and of eternally protesting that they wanted "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform."

The worth of the new Liberal organisation was now tested. It was in working order in sixty-seven constituencies, and in sixty of them Liberals were returned to the new Parliament. In Birmingham two Conservatives appeared: Captain Burnaby, who was famous as the author of "The Ride to Khiva," and the Hon. A. G. Calthorpe, whose family owned the whole of Edgbaston, the richest suburb of Birmingham, in which, however, resided the most ardent supporters of the Liberal party. Had their principles been popular, Burnaby and Calthorpe would have stood little chance of gaining a patient hearing among men accustomed to the eloquence of Mr. Chamberlain and the oratory of John Bright.

The first appearance of the Conservative candidates was in

1878, when they were unmercifully ridiculed. One cartoon depicts Captain Burnaby tilting at a windmill, from which Mr. Chamberlain, smiling imperturbably, watches him. In another the Conservative candidates were represented as "dumb animals"; one a big shaggy dog [Burnaby] who is saying to the other, a small and timid man [Calthorpe] "Can't *you* talk?" Mr. Chamberlain's attack on the licensing system, construed by the publicans into an attack on them, was made the subject of a number of these cartoons: in one he is shown as the municipal publican driving a roaring trade; in another he is seen ascending the steps of his club ("Always Open.—By Order of the Committee") at midnight, while next door two working men are turned away from the humble "Travellers' Rest," which, though it is still early in the evening, is "closed by Act of Parliament."

The successful return of the three Liberal candidates was celebrated by a cartoon of the Parliamentary train driven by Mr. Schnadhorst, into which an obsequious guard is hurrying Mr. Chamberlain, who has just arrived, while Mr. Bright and Mr. Muntz look out of the window of a carriage labelled "To London (Westminster)." Running down the platform are Captain Burnaby and Mr. Calthorpe, who are stopped by an official, who informs them that they have "taken the wrong ticket" (to Coventry).

A most interesting collection of cartoons illustrating Birmingham history between 1876 and 1886 might be made. Numbers of skits and doggerel verses, full of local allusions, found their way into circulation during the election, and the following specimens, poor as they are, show the state of feeling in the town:—

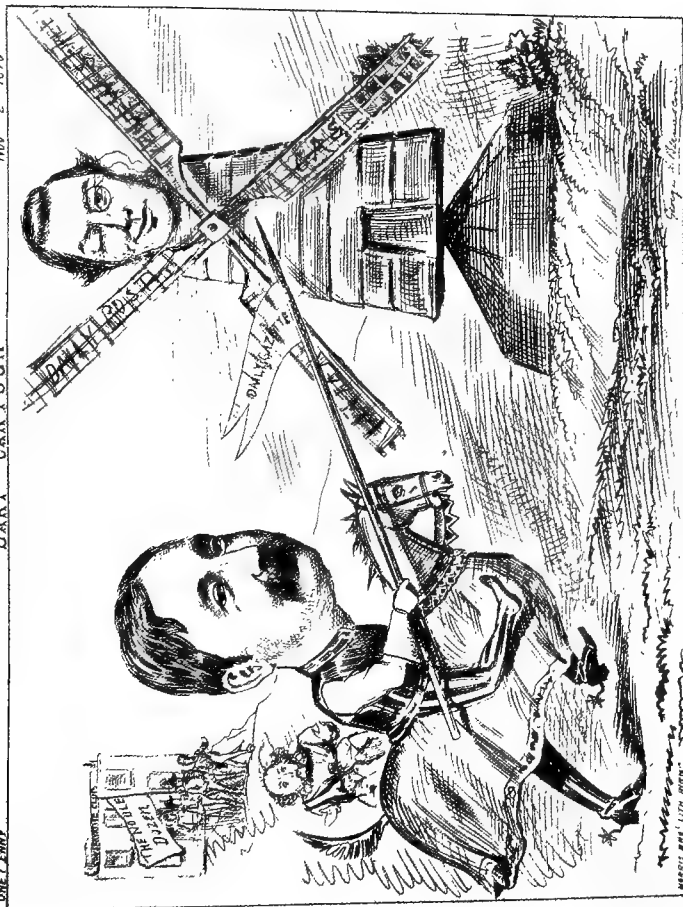
"Kick *Joseph* out! Our youngest born!

We, like the Patriarch of old,  
Must weep if Joseph should be torn  
From us—and into Egypt sold.

We cannot choose—but Burnaby  
We really *must* return—of course;  
We can't refuse to make M.P.

A man of such great mental force,





FRED (BURNABY) AND HIS LITTLE GO

TILTING. COLONEL BURNABY'S FIRST APPEARANCE CANVASSING BIRMINGHAM.

From a cartoon which appeared in the Birmingham *Dart*, November 2nd, 1878.



"Let Joseph go—or Phil [Muntz]—or Bright—  
 Their greatness is a patch to thine;  
 As Jablochkoff's electric light  
 Doth gas—so thine does theirs outshine.  
 Their manners too—how rough  
 Compared with those we find in thee!  
 Before we thought them good enough,  
 For we were blind—but now we see," etc.

Another says :—

"Our confidence we can't restrain  
 In Mister Joseph Chamberlain,  
 Warm of heart and strong of brain,  
 Ever modest, never vain.  
 Who did gas and water gain?  
 Who does our Liberal hopes maintain?  
 Who will make free teaching plain?  
 Who'll free the land from feudal stain?<sup>1</sup>  
 Who'll free the Church, both creed and fane?  
     Why, Mister Joseph Chamberlain.  
 Three cheers, and thrice three cheers again,  
     For Mister Joseph Chamberlain, etc.

The obedient members of the Liberal Association were mercilessly lampooned, but they did as they were told and gloried in their new name, issuing the following verses :—

#### "VOTE-AS-YOU'RE-TOLD.

"Here's to the man who has fought for the right,  
 Here's to the man who is trusty and bold,  
 Here's to our silver-haired hero John Bright;  
 We'll carry *him* in with 'Vote-as-you're-told,' etc.

"Here's to Joe Chamberlain, manly and sound—  
 Shame fall on the man who is cold!—  
 To him by a thousand good deeds we are bound,  
 And we'll carry *him* in with 'Vote-as-you're-told,' etc.  
     Etc., etc., etc.

When the returns became known after the General Election

<sup>1</sup> Law of Primogeniture.

of 1880, Lord Beaconsfield resigned in April without waiting for a meeting of Parliament.

Although Mr. Chamberlain in a hasty moment had designated Lord Hartington "the late leader of the Liberal party," "the serious son of a respectable duke" was still its nominal head, and for him the Queen sent when Lord Beaconsfield placed his resignation in her hands. It was openly said that her Majesty would not summon Mr. Gladstone if either of the other Liberal leaders could be prevailed upon to form a Ministry. As a matter of fact, Lord Hartington was first sent for to Windsor, and then Lord Granville. Though it was believed that an unofficial intimation had reached Mr. Gladstone that the Queen wished to see him, he did not go to Windsor until he received the usual official summons.

To those who knew anything of the state of feeling among the various sections of the Liberal party, it was certain that no one but Mr. Gladstone could form a Ministry, or keep one together after it had been formed. He had already made his peace with the Radicals, and had tacitly approved of their organisation by being present at the Federation of the Liberal Associations in 1877.

When the strength of parties was ascertained, it was estimated that there were 243 Conservatives, 349 Liberals, and 60 Irish Nationalists. It was clear, therefore, that even if the latter voted unitedly with the Conservatives, the Liberals would still have a substantial majority. A more unlikely contingency could at the moment scarcely be imagined, for Beaconsfield's election manifesto had so offended the Irish that they in their turn issued another calling on Irishmen everywhere to vote against "Benjamin Disraeli, the enemy of their country and their race."

Within the Liberal party itself the strength of the various sections was not so easy to ascertain. They might be roughly divided into Whigs, headed by Lord Hartington; advanced Liberals, represented principally by Gladstone and partially by Bright; and Radicals, led by Mr. Chamberlain and Sir

Charles Dilke, whose programme commanded increasing support from a large body of Liberals.

Mr. Gladstone could not do without the support of the Radicals, and he could not obtain it unless they were represented in his Government. Admitting that they possessed their full share of political ambition, their refusal to support him unless thus represented was based on a sound principle. By accepting minor offices in the Government they would signify their willingness to follow its policy, while they would have no direct hand in shaping that policy in the Cabinet. On the other hand, with a spokesman in the Cabinet they would be able to make their wishes known. The question now was, who was to be that Radical member of the Cabinet?

It says much for the impression Mr. Chamberlain had made in only four years of Parliamentary life that his name was freely mentioned as one of the two possible candidates; the other was Sir Charles Dilke. Either was prepared to accept a subordinate post should Mr. Gladstone offer Cabinet rank to the other. Mr. Gladstone eventually decided to offer Mr. Chamberlain the post of President of the Board of Trade, and Sir Charles Dilke's knowledge of military affairs was utilised in the office of Under-Secretary for War. Mr. Bright became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Both Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain went to the Board of Trade when they first entered the Ministry, and both were, by their business training and general commercial knowledge, well qualified to hold that office.

## CHAPTER XV

### *THE MINISTER AT HOME*

1880

FREE LIBRARIES FIRE—1879—CHAMBERLAIN MEMORIAL—MR.  
RICHARD CHAMBERLAIN AS MAYOR, 1880 AND 1881—LIFE AT  
HIGHBURY—THE ARTS' CLUB.

**D**URING the four years that had passed since Mr. Chamberlain's entry into Parliament, his interest in Birmingham men and matters had in no way diminished. He kept up his knowledge of local politics, was aware of all that was being done on the School Board, and not until his appointment in 1880 as Minister in Mr. Gladstone's Government did he resign his seat on the Town Council.

In 1879 the town had suffered a grievous loss, in many ways an irreparable one, by the burning down of the Central Free Library, and the destruction of special collections of great value, including the Staunton collection of Warwickshire prints and manuscripts and the splendid Shakespeare and Cervantes libraries. The fire occurred on Saturday afternoon, January 11th, during an intense frost. Alarming rumours soon reached the skaters in the neighbourhood of the town, and men left in hundreds to see what was the matter, arriving at the fire to find the great pile fiercely alight and the firemen quite unable to cope with the flames.

Such a scene had never before been witnessed in Birmingham. The Mayor (Alderman Jesse Collings), with blackened face, with scorched clothes, and drenched to the skin, together with half the Town Councillors and book-lovers

of Birmingham in similar plight, was carrying armfuls of precious folios across to the Council House and offices in the neighbourhood. From the School of Art adjoining, separated only by a partition from the burning buildings, men and women students rushed to save anything which could be saved. The work was dangerous as well as difficult, and the Mayor narrowly escaped a serious accident. The water from the pipes froze on the pavements, and more than one person was injured by falling upon the ice. As the firemen worked, the spray froze upon their hair and beards, and icicles hung from the burning building.

The townspeople were terribly depressed by the loss of their fine library, and it is not too much to say that those who had done so much in gathering together the treasures it contained were almost heartbroken for a time. From all quarters came not only condolences, but kindly offers of help. Her Majesty sent a donation, and from the colonies came prompt and generous offers of assistance.

Before the steam from the smoking buildings had vanished into the wintry air, the people were considering how to repair their loss. At a meeting of the Libraries Committee on the Monday after the fire it was resolved that immediate steps be taken for this end and that the public be asked for £10,000 at once. Although it was a time of great commercial depression and hundreds of men were out of work, the response to this appeal from all classes was prompt and liberal. The origin of the fire was the ignition of some shavings which, through the carelessness of a gasman in repairing a pipe, were allowed to come in contact with a jet of gas. As Mr Chamberlain was at the time still Chairman of the Gas Committee, one of its members went to tell him of the disaster.

"On arriving at Southbourne," he said, "I found Mr. Chamberlain in his library. He expressed the utmost concern on hearing what had happened, and I asked him what we should do in face of so great loss.

"'Do?' he replied at once; 'build a bigger and a better one than before.'

"On the Monday a Committee was called to consider the question of rebuilding, and I remember that Chamberlain came into the Club with a subscription list in his hand, which he showed to me, and I found that in addition to his own large donation he had already obtained promises for a very considerable amount before coming to the meeting. This action was characteristic of him in many ways."

A letter was read at this Committee meeting in which Mr. Chamberlain offered £1,000 from "a private source at his command," and himself gave £500. In the evening he was addressing a meeting of working men, and, referring to their loss, said it should only spur them on to greater efforts, and he felt confident Birmingham would not rest until a far finer library was erected.

When Mr. Chamberlain became President of the Board of Trade, his brother Richard was Mayor of Birmingham, and held that office for two years.

It was during his first year of Mayoralty that the public presentation of the vote of thanks from the Town Council was made to the new Minister, the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, on his resignation of his Aldermanship and connection with the Corporation.

In commemoration of his work on behalf of the town it was decided to erect a memorial in the form of a fountain, which bears his medallion on the front of it. This was completed and presented to the town with much ceremony on October 26th, 1880. In the evening of the same day a banquet in honour of Birmingham's junior Member was given by his brother the Mayor at the Council House. The memorial fountain is erected in the centre of what is known as Chamberlain Square, profanely called "Squirt Square," from the small boys who there do congregate, and who amuse themselves by playing with the water. On the one side of the fountain is a statue in honour of George Dawson, and on the other, one of Sir Josiah Mason, who gave to the town the Mason Science College, now Birmingham University. This building lies immediately behind the square, which is



bounded otherwise by the Town Hall, Art Gallery, and Free Library.

Mr. Richard Chamberlain served the town faithfully, both in and out of the Town Council. He was **Mr. Richard Chamberlain.** Deputy Bailiff of the Grammar School Board after its reorganisation in 1878, and he took a deep interest in the movement to rebuild the School of Art and put it into the hands of the Corporation.

"The result of his efforts," says Mr. Bunce, "was disclosed at the Council Meeting in November, 1881, by the announcement of three offers of assistance unexampled in the unity of time and magnitude of amount—two being donations of money (of £10,000 each) and one of a valuable site for the new School of Art."

The money was given by Messrs. Tangye and Miss Ryland, the site by Mr. Cregoe Colmore. Mr. Richard Chamberlain continued his labours as one of the School of Art Committee, and was ably seconded by Mr. William Kenrick. The Art Gallery was also largely aided by generous contributions of pictures from both these gentlemen—Mr. Richard Chamberlain offering "any two pictures" out of his collection which the Council might select. His brother's gift of two fine examples by Müller has already been mentioned.

Mr. Richard Chamberlain's special gift was for finance. He was the possessor of a very wonderful "slide rule" which, so his colleagues in the Council pretended, could solve calculations beyond the unaided power of any ordinary Councillor. As Mayor his popularity was very great, and his hospitality, though in no way ostentatious, was generous and graceful. He received a special vote of thanks from the Council for extending it to the representatives of the friendly societies "as a graceful recognition of the valuable work done by their agency in inculcating the principles of thrift and self-help among the industrial classes of the community." He also provided free organ recitals in the Town

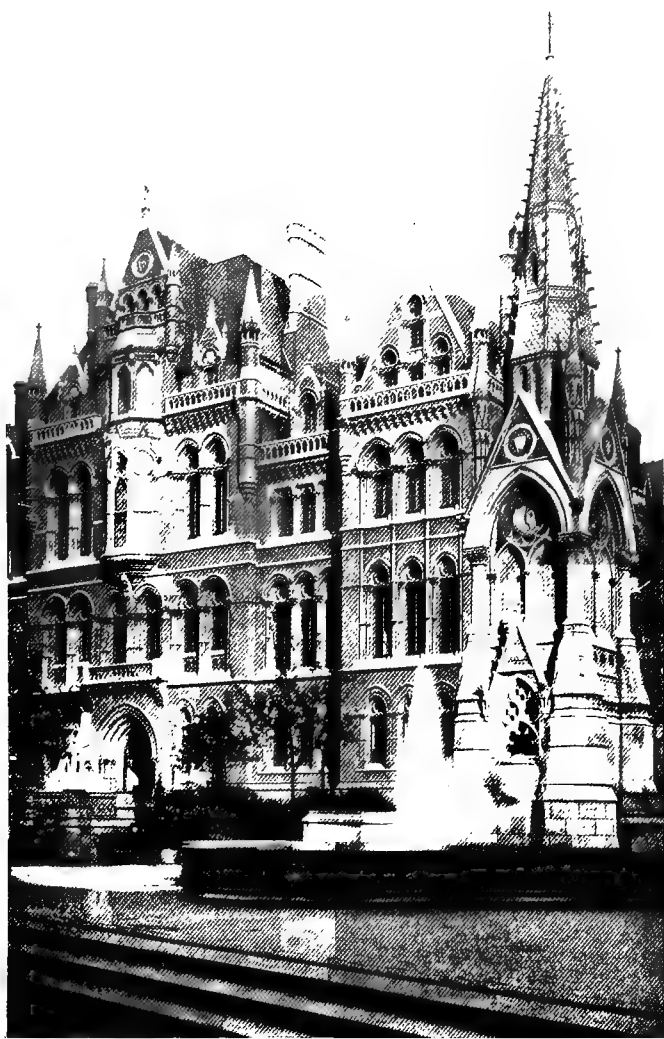
Hall on Saturday afternoons, which were very keenly appreciated. The Council House library was founded by him, and he expressed his hope that succeeding Mayors would see their way to contribute to its completion.

He lost his wife, even as his brother had done, while still in the midst of his municipal career, though his two years of Mayoralty were ended at the time of her death. In acknowledging the kindly vote of condolence sent by the Town Council, he said :—

“The terms of the resolution do but afford another instance of that kindly feeling on the part of my colleagues which has been shown me during all the time I have had the honour of serving with them.”

Mr. Richard Chamberlain afterwards became Liberal Member for one of the divisions of Islington, and joined the Liberal-Unionists after the split in 1886. He remained in Parliament until his nephew, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, took his seat, whom he, together with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, introduced to the House. Failing health compelled him to give up public work, and he died in March, 1899, leaving two daughters by his first, and one son by his second, wife.

In 1880 Mr. Chamberlain left Edgbaston and settled at **Highbury**. Highbury, a large house which he had built for himself close to Moor Green Hall, Worcestershire, about three miles from Birmingham, where his brother Arthur still lives; Highbury was named after the old home in London. His friend the late Mr. J. H. Chamberlain was the architect; the gardens were laid out by Mr. Milner, the landscape gardener who had laid out those of Southbourne. Mr. Chamberlain had now the space necessary for the hot-houses in which he was to cultivate his favourite flower, and from that time he was seldom seen on any public occasion without a choice orchid in his buttonhole. His friends used to chaff him about the palace of Highbury and foretell such an access of grandeur that they would be unable to visit him as of old. But it is safe to say their



*Photo by]*

*[Draycott.*

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY AND THE CHAMBERLAIN MEMORIAL  
FOUNTAIN.



welcome was as warm, and the hospitality extended to them as generous, as it had been in the old days at Southbourne.

The *Town Crier* published a letter supposed to be written to Mr. Chamberlain by the Council House curator, telling him—

“how the old Town Council here is a-goin’ of it. First of all, I ought to tell you Richard has my corjal approbation as Mayor. At the same time I think as how the responsibilities of office sit heavy on his sole. His hair don’t seem so raving black as it was when he first come to the old Council House.

“Richard’s a good deal too amiable with them Aldermen and Councillors, and he lets ’em talk more nor is good for ’em, or me either. Ah! when you was here, how we used to bowl ’em over like ninepins, if they tried to talk too much, and get through the business like a pot a-bilin’. . . .

“But all the members, young and old, often talks about you, and sometimes I hear ’em speakin’ about the new house you’re a-bildin’ at More Green. . . . Some on ’em thinks as it be a long way to go to dinner to meet the Royal Family and nobility. Most of ’em, though, seems to think it’s a first-rate house. . . . I’ve been to see it, and I think it’s palayshull.”

The working man also expresses his views on Mr. Chamberlain as Minister :—

“Now there’s Chamberlain, our Member. We workin’ men admire and respeck him no end. But you know when we sent him to Parliament he was a-goin’ to put things right, he was. . . . But law bless yer, he hadn’t bin there long enough to do nothink as he promised afore he got a nice place, and now a course he’s obliged to be circumspeck.

“A course it’s all right, and I daresay we should all do the same if we had the same temtashuns. . . .

“But arter all it’s jolly rum! I think, myself, Joseph does as much, and speaks out as much, as any feller in the Cabinet can, and if he goes on a-speakin’ out much more, maybe as he’ll get turned off his job.

“Still, yer know a Member can’t be a genuine Member and a Cabinet Minister at the same time. . . .

"It don't seem to me it's much use a-combinin' and a-unionin' now. When a man sacrifices his independence, and goes a-doin' everything in rucks, he ought to get some advantage by it, but I can't see as how he does."

This last remark has reference to the alleged tyranny of trades unions, and perhaps is also a quiet dig at the "Vote-as-you're-told" policy.

For many years Mr. Chamberlain had been one of the **The Arts Club.** most prominent members of a club to which most influential Birmingham Liberals belonged. It was quite a small club known as the Arts Club, founded about the year 1873 for the purpose of "facilitating the daily social intercourse of gentlemen holding Liberal opinions who are engaged or interested in the public life of Birmingham." Its influence was very great, and in proportion to its strength it was disliked by those outside it, who were only too ready to assert that not only municipal matters—such as the election of the Mayor and Councillors—were practically determined within its walls, but that the greater part of the Liberal political programme was also arranged by its members; there, they said, Schnadhorst received his orders, and there the inner circle concerted measures for the overawing of the malcontents.

A powerful majority engaged in political work is nearly always accused of being ruled by a clique, and at the heart of most successful political organisations is often a club, ostensibly a social club, where men united by common interests and common anxieties meet to discuss their line of action in presence of the foe. The number of the members of the Arts Club was never to exceed seventy-five; it is noteworthy that ten of them were Mayors of the borough, and eight are, or have been, Members of the House of Commons, namely the Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain and his brother Richard, the Rt. Hon. W. Kenrick, the Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, Mr. Powell Williams, Sir Walter Foster, Alderman Cook, and Mr. J. S. Wright (who never took his seat, as he died suddenly shortly after his election). Other

well-known men who belonged to the club were Dr. Dale, George Dawson, Sam Timmins, J. Thackray Bunce, Francis Schnadhorst, J. H. Chamberlain, Arthur Chamberlain (second brother of the Colonial Secretary), William Harris, and many others who made their mark on Birmingham life.

In small unpretentious rooms over a tailor's shop earnest and important discussions took place on Council matters, and generally some plan of united action was decided on. Here Mr. Chamberlain unfolded and discussed his ideas as to the Gothenburg system of licensing, and amused his audience with capital stories of his own and Mr. Collings's adventures in Sweden and Lapland ; here, too, some of the Mathews family, members of the Alpine Club, would tell mountaineering stories. The great feature of the club was the after-luncheon hour, when, in the smoking-room, discussions on public affairs, free chaff, and many good stories were to be heard. To this club members would bring distinguished strangers ; among others who came at different times were John Bright, Sir Charles Dilke, and John Morley, the last-named often. Occasionally a "Sociable Supper" was held with more or less success, but some good talkers found it difficult to be sociable to order, and a sarcastic member, amid complete silence, asked quietly : "At what hour did we arrange to begin to be sociable?"

It is interesting to note the opinion of this club as set forth in one of the Birmingham papers :<sup>1</sup>—

"Mr. Chamberlain's friends founded, soon after he came to the front, a small political club, to which only the wealthy and faithful few among the Liberal leaders were admitted. This club has become the real seat of government, where all measures are framed for the ordering of our municipal, social, charitable, and political institutions. It cannot be wondered at that those among the party who are not admitted to its secret councils should look with jealous eyes on this club, and that it should be viewed with secret dislike by a very large section of the Liberal party in this town. . . .

<sup>1</sup> *The Dart.*

"Hitherto there have been no questions on which any large section of the Liberal party has been divided from another. But it is hardly possible, with such diametrically opposite religious beliefs, that such will not arise. . . .

"The real leaders of the Liberal party are divided into two sections: at the head of one is Mr. Chamberlain, at present the principal leader of the other is Mr. R. W. Dale, a Congregational minister. The Chamberlain dynasty are secularist to a man, and some day great religious questions will crop up, on which all the Liberals who follow Mr. Dale and Mr. Wright (President of the Liberal Association) will find themselves in a different camp from that of Chamberlain, Timmins, and Collings. And then it will be found that Mr. Chamberlain has command of the vast electoral machinery of the town, by means of which it is boasted that even a chimney-sweep would be returned to Parliament if the electors were told to vote for him."

This prediction of a split in the party on religious grounds was not verified; when the split did come, Mr. Chamberlain and Dr. Dale were found upon the same side. It is also incorrect to say that the membership of the Arts Club was limited to the wealthy. Whether it was viewed with dislike by any large section of the Liberal party, or was really a caucus in any objectionable sense of the term, and usurped the functions of more representative bodies, as alleged, may well be doubted.

This club was dissolved by mutual consent in 1879, when the new Liberal Club was founded, but the latter never flourished as the older institution had done, and it was a financial failure; the expenses of establishment were far too large. It was housed in a huge and costly building adjoining the Mason Science College, and after the split up of the party in 1886 had to be closed, and the premises sold at a heavy loss to members and shareholders. The buildings were first used as the Girls' High School in connection with King Edward VI's Foundation, and afterwards let out as offices.

The same freedom and friendship as there had been in



the old Arts Club was not found among the members of the new Liberal Club. It was opened with much rejoicing by Mr. Bright in 1879, and for a time its prospects were very promising. But the General Election of 1885 saw it at the high-water mark of its prosperity and influence, and the polling night was the most memorable in its history.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *THE MINISTER AT WORK.*

1880-1885

LEADER OF THE RADICALS—CONSTRUCTIVE LEGISLATION—BANKRUPTCY ACTS—PATENTS ACT—MERCHANT SHIPPING BILL—FIGHT FOR THE FRANCHISE.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN had made his name known in debate ; he was now to show that he could carry the House with him in constructive legislation of an important character. Much of the time that should have been available for domestic legislation in 1880 and 1881 was wasted over Mr. Bradlaugh and his right to affirm, and over the Irish question. Indeed, the organised—one might almost say the scientific—obstruction of the Irish party was the cause of the destruction or the postponement of important measures throughout the whole of this administration. Indirectly the Irish Members were the means of procuring the new Rules of Procedure, and though there is still room for improvement in the methods of the House of Commons, it is doubtful if the more expeditious despatch of business now possible would have been attained had not the conduct of the Nationalists clearly shown the necessity for such new rules. So long as Parliamentary obstruction remains a fine art, so long will it become necessary at intervals to meet the obstructionists on their own ground and devise fresh checks.

Mr. Chamberlain was one of the most ardent supporters of the new Rules of Procedure,<sup>1</sup> as he also was of the institution

<sup>1</sup> In 1890, in an article in the *Nineteenth Century*, Mr. Chamberlain contrasts the English and American Parliamentary procedure. He

of the Grand Committees of the House of Commons, the one dealing with law and justice, the other with trade, shipping, and manufactures. The idea underlying their appointment was, that to save the time of the House, technical details should be dealt with by Members who were experts, and that their recommendations should receive the same consideration that those made by a Committee of the whole House would receive.

In this Session Mr. Chamberlain was engaged in mastering the details of his office, which included anything from margarine to the mercantile marine, and from trichinosis to traction engines. There is, in fact, a cartoon published about this time which represents him as "Too busy to talk!"

For a landsman Mr. Chamberlain took an unusual interest in ships and shipping, and his knowledge of matters concerning the lives of seamen was accurate and extensive. In his first Session he managed to get two measures passed for their benefit, one dealing with grain cargoes, the other with the payment of seamen's wages.

In 1881 he introduced an Act empowering municipalities to undertake their own lighting by electricity if they received the sanction of the Board of Trade, without the trouble and expense of obtaining a separate Act of Parliament.

His Bankruptcy Bill, introduced in the first Session, had to be dropped, but he carried a measure dealing with this subject in 1883. His Patents Bill became law the same year. The chief merits of the former were that it "checked a great deal of the waste and some of the fraud which had gone on before points out that the suppression of debate is the result of the American system, but that in England the factious conduct of the minority—"very often a small minority made up of the least respectable and least intelligent members of the Opposition"—causes the paralysis of all government, and legislation is often "only possible by the sufferance of that minority." And he proposes a scheme by which the abuse may be remedied.

Work of  
the Board  
of Trade.

1880.

1881.

Patents and  
Bankruptcy  
Bills. 1883.

it became law. . . . It required that the conduct of the insolvent should be subjected to a searching inquiry, and that the action and accounts of the trustees should be controlled and audited by an independent authority."

In moving the second reading, March 19th, 1883, Mr. Chamberlain said :—

"This was not a matter which could be considered a very exciting one . . . but it was a question which had a deep interest for great masses of our people, and especially for the great body of industrious tradesmen, who saw, with natural indignation, that under the present system swindling was made so easy, so safe, and so profitable, that they often found their hardly-won earnings wrested from them by the fraud and culpable misconduct of others."

The Bill was acknowledged to be a good Bill, if not a perfect one ; but so long as fraudulent debtors exist they will find means of evading the law, and it will be constantly necessary to amend the law to prevent these evasions.

The Patents Bill was warmly welcomed. It enabled the inventor to take out a "provisional patent" for £1 and reduced the first payment from £20 to £3. The poor but clever inventor had now an infinitely better chance than before of profiting by his own ingenuity. The Grand Committee on Trade was of the greatest service to Mr. Chamberlain in enabling him to get these two measures promptly and fairly discussed. They were passed with comparatively little opposition.

But when Mr. Chamberlain came forward with his **Merchant Shipping Bill**, matters were very different. Had the measure been absolutely perfect, it would have met with organised opposition for two reasons. Firstly, it was to the interest of a certain number of shipowners to oppose interference with the direct or indirect profits they derived from the loss of their ships. But Mr. Chamberlain hoped that the upright men engaged in the trade would

openly dissociate themselves from those who were undoubtedly, though secretly, over-insuring their ships in order to profit by their loss. Secondly, Mr. Chamberlain had too closely identified himself with Mr. Plimsoll to obtain the support of the majority of the shipowners. Mr. Plimsoll, in his despair at the apparent failure of his efforts in a noble cause, had in 1875 hurled terrible accusations at the shipowners as a body—charges which were equally resented by the best and the worst men, though for different reasons; and, as it happened, the Mayor of Birmingham, the future President of the Board of Trade, had presided at a town's meeting called to sympathise with Mr. Plimsoll and to condemn the inaction of Lord Beaconsfield's Government.

There were two other reasons which helped to increase the difficulty of getting the Bill through. It was considered by many to be more stringent than was necessary or, perhaps it would be more correct to say, than was advisable at the moment; secondly, the Government, discredited by their conduct of Egyptian affairs and by the Transvaal Convention, looked coldly upon a measure that would alienate a solid body of voters.

Mr. Chamberlain had tried to frame his Bill in a conciliatory spirit, and though no large proportion of the shipowners would openly support it, the best of them were agreed as to the need for such a measure. When speaking to a deputation from the Associated Chambers of Shipping (March 8th, 1883), he appealed most earnestly to their sense of justice.

"I know absolutely no trade, except that of shipowners, in which it is possible for a man to lose life and property and actually make a profit out of it (Hear, hear). . . .

"I will draft the clauses of a Bill to carry out such amendments in the law as seem desirable. But before attempting to introduce such a Bill, I will send it round to every shipping organisation with which I am acquainted, and I will appeal to you once more for your advice and assistance and practical suggestions. But do not meet me by a

*non possumus* ; do not content yourselves by saying that you do not want any legislation ; but consider the serious nature of the circumstances and give me your assistance—for it is as much your interest as mine to remedy what is defective.”

In the House, at the close of his speech proposing the second reading, he asked :—

“Who is to be benefited by delay [in passing the Bill]? . . . I say for my own part that I have done all I can. I have made great concessions. I do not say that I have liked these concessions ; . . . but under the pressure under which I am put, I cannot do what I would do, or all that I think it would be right to do. But I am anxious to do what I can, and I think if I am met in anything like the spirit which I hope I have shown in introducing the subject, that it may still be possible, even having regard to the advanced period of the session, to do something . . . which will provide in some measure, at all events, for the greater security of life and property at sea.”

When the Bill was withdrawn, a Royal Commission to inquire into the subject was appointed, and the subsequent legislation between 1888 and 1894, which greatly improved the position of men in the merchant service, was largely owing to Mr. Chamberlain's exertions. He himself did not believe that his Bill was too stringent. In speaking at Hull a year later (August, 1885), he said :—

“That Bill did not go far enough. It was the most I thought possible to achieve under the circumstances of the time, but I will never again introduce so inadequate a measure. . . . The principle we ought to establish is this, that no man has a right to risk the property of others, still more to risk others' lives, unless he takes a substantial pecuniary risk himself. . . . We must do all we can to enlist on the side of security the most potent factor of self-interest. We must make it to the interest of the shipowner to do all that is necessary to security.”

Mr. Chamberlain consented to the postponement of his

Bill with the utmost reluctance. So great was his disappointment at his failure to carry the measure, that he wished to resign, not, as he said, from personal pique, but—

“in order that I might carry this matter to the constituencies—and ask them if they would allow the lives of men to be sacrificed to private interest or party expediency.

“Mr. Gladstone showed me on that occasion, as he has always done, the most generous and kind consideration. He asked me not to press my wish upon him, and expressed the opinion that if I were to resign such a course might injure the prospects of some of the measures whose success I, as well as others, most earnestly desired. We were in the midst of the franchise agitation, and I felt then, as I do now, that the best chance of success in this matter of doing justice to the seamen depends upon the resolution of a reformed Parliament.

“Therefore, in deference to Mr. Gladstone’s judgment, and with the anxious desire to promote in every way the reformed representation to which I attach so much importance, I consented to remain, but I did not abandon, and will never abandon, the purpose I have had in view.”

In spite of the Irish obstruction between 1880 and 1885, some domestic legislation other than that due to Mr. Chamberlain’s initiative had been accomplished. His work was not confined to piloting his own measures through Parliament; his influence, both in and out of the House, was used to obtain the long-expected, long-desired extension of the franchise, for he depended largely (as in the case of the Shipping Bill) on the new voters to support his demands for a further instalment of Free Church, Free Land, and Free Schools.

The Franchise Bill was introduced on February 29th, 1884, was thrown out by the Peers (by means of Lord Cairns’s amendment) in July, was re-introduced unaltered in the Commons on October 24th, and became law on December 6th, 1884.

But these dates do not represent anything like the real duration of the fight, and the immense amount of time and attention given by Mr. Chamberlain, as well as by other Liberal leaders, to preparing the country

Swansea.  
February,  
1883.

for it. On February 1st, 1883, Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at Swansea, says with a sigh of relief: "Now at last there seems to be a chance that this great winding up [of Conservative arrears] will be completed. At last I begin to hope the Liberal Government is going to do business on its own account."

In November of the same year (1883) he says that franchise must come first, and the Government would be open to a charge of—

"betraying its trust if it were to leave anything to hazard in a matter of such great importance. . . . In the question of the Franchise you have a very simple question which raises very few points of principle, and those are points which can be easily and quickly decided. It is a question on which you may say practically the whole Liberal party is agreed. If you can only contrive to tack to it another question, very complicated and very difficult, on the details of which difference of opinion may very naturally arise, then there is a chance that both questions may be got rid of together. . . . The two questions are to my mind independent and distinct. [There are] two wrongs to be redressed. Why should we delay giving a vote to men who are absolutely at the present moment outside the pale of the Constitution because we have not yet agreed among ourselves as to the machinery by which we will endeavour to estimate the proportionate weight and value of the vote which should be given? . . . Until you have got the new register, there are no means at our disposal for knowing what the numbers in the new constituencies will be."

As to the difficulties in the way, on another occasion (December, 1883) Mr. Chamberlain bids his hearers remember—

"that statesmen only exist in order to overcome difficulties; if we never attempt anything but what is perfectly easy, we shall have a very poor record at the end of our time to appeal to. . . . It is one of those questions which grows hotter the longer it is kept. The people will not always be waiting patiently for their rights. . . . There are six millions of your



fellow-men—men of full age—who at the present moment are absolutely pariahs in our Parliamentary system, and are excluded from their chief political rights. Out of seventeen men that you meet in the streets five have votes, and twelve have no part in the Government of the country, in the choosing of their representative. There is nothing like this in any civilised country of Europe. . . . There is nothing like it in those great self-governing colonies of whose prosperity, of whose orderly progress and intelligence, we are so justly proud; and I confess when I think of these things I am inclined to say of those who are not now voters, in the words of the popular opera—

“ ‘Tis greatly to his credit,  
Altho’ himself has said it,  
That, in spite of all temptations  
To belong to other nations,  
He remains an Englishman.’ ”

“ . . . We are told we must be prepared for the worst. The House of Lords will at the last moment exercise its constitutional prerogative and will force a dissolution. . . . I am not afraid of an appeal even to the present limited electorate. No doubt if Lord Salisbury chooses, he may take their opinion and yours upon the issue which he himself will have raised—the issue between the peers and the people—between the privileges of the few and the rights of the many. The responsibility will be his; the results, I believe, will not be unsatisfactory to us. I am inclined to hope, in the words of the beautiful Church Litany which is read every Sunday, that ‘the nobility may be endued with grace, wisdom, and understanding.’ ”

Throughout the country the Liberal Associations were busy ascertaining the feeling of the constituencies as to the proposed Government Bill, while the Tories denounced the organisation as a copy of the worst features of the American caucus.

“The issue of this great question,” said Mr. Chamberlain, “will soon be in your hands. Governments propose, but the people decide. . . . For my part, I believe that the will of the people ought to be, and must be, supreme.”

The Bill, as we have said, was brought in on February 29th, 1884, and Mr. Chamberlain's famous speech was made in March. A few passages will show the line he took before the House :—

“We propose to call up to the exercise of the highest function of citizenship two millions of men. We ask you to say whether that is a great, just, expeditious, and beneficent object. We ask you if you are prepared to put trust in the people or if you still fear them, as you have feared them on so many previous occasions. And if you do not fear them, are you prepared for an immediate extension of the franchise? We ask you whether the Bill goes too far or not far enough, whom you are willing to enfranchise and whom you condemn to political nullity. I think the country would like to have an answer.”

Assuming that the Opposition were anxious for a satisfactory settlement of the Franchise question, their conduct was inexplicable ; but if they were really hostile to the extension of the Franchise and distrustful of their fellow-men, they would take the course which the Opposition had taken in reference to the present Bill. “I am sure the country will draw the natural conclusions,” said Mr. Chamberlain grimly.

Lord Randolph Churchill thought the people were not in earnest in wanting the franchise, “and,” said Mr. Chamberlain, “I pay the greatest attention to everything he (Lord R. Churchill) says—first, because I believe he always says what he means and means what he says ; and, secondly, because I find that what he says to-day, his leaders say to-morrow. . . . They may not like the prescription he makes up for them, but they always swallow it.”

Lord Randolph would only give the franchise if forced to do so.

“If I saw the agricultural labourers of Great Britain . . . marching on London, tearing down the railings of Hyde Park, engaging the police, and even the military, I should say to myself, ‘These men . . . have made up their minds to have the

vote ; they have shown pretty well they will know how to use it [by marching on London?], and if we wish for peace, order, and stability, we must give it them.' On these grounds only," he said, "I consent to equalise the position of the agricultural labourer and the town artisan."

Mr. Chamberlain characterised this as "a very remarkable utterance," and "a direct incitement to outrage." He then set forth the case of the agricultural labourer who had no voice in public affairs, and made his famous indictment of both parties :—

"The interests of the agricultural labourers have been too long neglected and ignored, very much to the injury of the class concerned. What has happened in consequence of the agricultural labourers not having a voice in this House? They have been robbed of their land. They have been robbed of their rights in the commons. They have been robbed of their open spaces. . . . The agricultural labourers are still being robbed. You cannot go into a single country lane in which you will not find that the landowners on each side of the road have already enclosed lands which for centuries have belonged to the people, or that they are on the point of enclosing them. That is not all. It is going on also with respect to the endowments of the poor. . . . Under the direction of the Charity Commissioners there has been going on a transfer of property which, in many cases, transfers from the poor to the rich the funds intended for the poor. Right honourable gentlemen opposite are very eager and not very courteous in interrupting me. . . . I take shame to the Liberal party quite as much as to the Conservative party. We are both to blame, but these wrongs would never have been committed had the agricultural labourers had a voice in this House. . . . [The new Bill, it was said, might make a difference to the strength of the Irish vote.]

"Many of us do not like the opinions held by the majority of the Irish people, but we cannot suppress those opinions ; and under these circumstances it is to our interest that those opinions, however unpopular, should at least be represented in this House ; and we should permit the people of Ireland to bring their

**Representa-  
tion of  
Ireland.**

grievances to a constitutional test, and not force them to modes of redress to which we are most seriously opposed. Agitation is always legitimate so long as there are grievances to be redressed, and the grievances of Ireland are very great and urgent in this matter."

It had also been objected that it was inopportune to bring in this Bill at present, "but," said Mr. Chamberlain finely,

"it is always opportune to do a just thing. . . . In conclusion I will only point out that the issue before the House is really a very simple one. We propose to widen the foundation of our political institutions. We propose to associate the largest number of capable citizens in the work of government. . . .

"I hope that the House of Commons will be true to its pledges and its traditions and that this Bill will pass by a great majority. Then, perhaps, the House of Lords will be true to its traditions also. In that case, let the nation decide between us, and I for one, have no fear of the result."

Both the hope and the prophecy were fulfilled. The Lords threw out the Bill, ostensibly because it was not accompanied by a redistribution scheme, and "two millions of capable citizens were kept waiting indefinitely for their political rights."

Immense demonstrations were held everywhere to protest against the action of the House of Lords. The people were in earnest, but Lord Salisbury refused to believe in their earnestness, and he sneered at "legislation by picnic."

"An admirable phrase," said Mr. Chamberlain, "in the mouth of the master of flouts and jeers, but although 'legislation by picnic' is not an altogether desirable thing, obstruction by privilege is an unmitigated nuisance. . . . I do not think the people of this country are in a mood to be mocked by epigrams, however finished they may be. . . . In the course of next autumn, on every platform, in every household, there will be a discussion as to the past history and present action and the future prospects of the House of Lords."

In October, four days before Parliament met, Mr. Chamberlain was speaking at Denbigh, where he met with a great reception. He had been accused by Sir Stafford Northcote of being animated by spite against the House of Lords, which he characterised as a—

“very unnecessary observation and a very silly one. . . . I have always thought that it was a very picturesque institution, attractive from its connection with the history of our country. I have no desire to see dull uniformity of social life ; I am rather thankful than otherwise to gentlemen who will take the trouble of wearing robes and coronets, and who will keep up certain state and splendour, which are very pleasant to look upon. But I cannot allow that these antiquities should control the destinies of a free Empire, and when they press their claims without discretion and without moderation, when they press them to an extreme which their predecessors never contemplated, I say they provoke inquiry and controversy, which cannot but end in their humiliation. . . . But the cup is nearly full. . . . We have been too long a peer-ridden nation, and I hope you will say to them that if they will not bow to the mandate of the people, they shall lose for ever the authority they have so long abused.”

Defiant as these words were, they were echoed throughout the length and breadth of England, not by Radicals merely, for the authority of the House of Commons was at stake. In fact, the Lords had done much to make the passing of the Bill possible. It was re-introduced unaltered in October and the third reading carried without a division. A compromise between the Houses was then effected, and a Redistribution Bill drafted by both parties in consultation. The Franchise Bill became law on December 6th, 1884, while the Redistribution Bill did not pass till the following June (1885).

## CHAPTER XVII

### *IRELAND. COERCION OR CONCILIATION?*

1880—1885

RELATIONS WITH PARNELL—COERCION OR CONCILIATION—  
KILMAINHAM TREATY—PHENIX PARK MURDER—PARNELL'S  
REPUDIATION OF THE LIBERALS.

**M**R. JUSTIN MCCARTHY, M.P., speaking of the Irish party under Mr. Gladstone's Government, says :—

“At home the ever-troublous Irish question had come up again in a new and more embarrassing form than before. Instead of any futile rising in the field, there was an organised Irish campaign in the House of Commons, led by a man of extraordinary ability and energy, the late Charles Stewart Parnell.

“Under Mr. Parnell's leadership the new agitation took the form of organised Parliamentary obstruction. The motto of Mr. Parnell and his followers seemed to be, ‘If you will not spare time to discuss the claims and grievances of Ireland, you shall not be allowed to transact any other business whatever.’”

The Irish doubtless overreached themselves in the matter of obstruction ; there were admittedly sufficient opportunities of legal and Parliamentary obstruction without having recourse to fresh devices. In February, 1881, thirty-six Members were suspended, one by one, after a sitting of forty-one hours ; in June, 1882, twenty-five members were suspended for obstruction in Committee after an all-night sitting. Many of the more moderate among them honestly

believed that to pursue these tactics was the only way to obtain the attention of the House for Irish legislation; on the other hand, their violence and extravagance, together with the reckless accusations which they flung broadcast, did much to make a fair consideration of the Irish question impossible, and alienated many of those who desired to see justice done to Ireland. It is true that justice to Ireland meant something very different in the mouths of the Irish and of the English, but it is little wonder that many Englishmen came at last to feel that no concessions would ever content those whose patriotism was of so green a tinge that it could brook the prosperity of no country, and would help to obtain justice for no people, while Irish affairs did not obtain the attention which was claimed for them.

Mr. Chamberlain's position on the Irish question was briefly this: he was opposed to coercion, anxious for conciliation, and determined to urge on the Government the necessity for the relief of Ireland's distress and the reform of her laws. So far did he go that he was taunted with being a friend of Mr. Parnell, and at a critical moment it was said that he had entered into an alliance with the Irish leader. But although Mr. Chamberlain was altogether opposed to Parnell's methods he considered him entitled to attention and respect, as the accepted leader of the Irish party. Nevertheless, Ireland could not be permitted to absorb all the time and attention of Imperial Parliament, nor should law-makers be law-breakers; the Irish Members as well as the Irish people must obey the law so long as it was in force.

"The Government of a free country is bound to take every step in its power to secure obedience to the law," said Mr. Chamberlain at Birmingham in 1881. "The law is the safeguard of the liberty of every one of us. The law means the protection of the weak against the strong, and if any class sets itself above the law, and if a weak Government should abet them in doing so, then I say there would be an end of all constitutional guarantees of our personal liberties.

On the other hand, any Government is bound to do its best to alter and amend the law where it thinks it to be unjust."

The chronic disorder in Ireland could not be attributed to the action of this or that Government; the causes were to be found in the condition of the people themselves, and we must cut deep if we wanted to get at the bottom of the matter. Mr. Gladstone, in introducing his Compensation for Disturbance Bill (1880), had said, "Ireland stands within measurable distance of civil war."

"That Bill was rejected by the Lords," said Mr. Chamberlain, "and civil war has begun: class is arrayed against class in social strife, and now thirty thousand soldiers and twelve thousand policemen are barely sufficient to enable the Government to protect the lives and the property of the Queen's subjects in Ireland. . . .

"What is to be done now? The Tories urge the Government to put aside the Land Bill, to give up any attempt at remedial legislation, and to go to Parliament for more and more coercion. . . .

"For my part, I hate coercion. I hate the name and I hate the thing. I am bound to say that I believe there is not one of my colleagues who does not hate it as I do. But then we hate disorder more. . . . We have offered our messages of peace to the Irish people. . . . And while discussion is prolonged in the House of Commons, the gloom of the situation in Ireland extends and deepens. Now why is it this important decision is so long delayed?"

The answer was, that it was delayed by Mr. Parnell.

"Mr. Parnell and those who follow him have never concealed the fact that their object is not the removal of grievances in Ireland, but the separation of Ireland from England. . . .

"How can we satisfy these men? Our object is not the same as theirs. We want to remove every just cause of grievance. They want to magnify grievances and to intensify differences. . . . [They] do not openly oppose the Land Bill because they are well aware that their constituents would not justify them in such a course. But they are not unwilling to put obstacles in its way. . . .





### "THE CHERUB!"

"THERE'S A SWEET LITTLE CHAMBERLAIN SITS UP ALOFT,  
TO KEEP WATCH FOR THE LIFE OF POOR JACK!"

From a *Punch* cartoon March 22nd, 1884, during a debate on Mr. Chamberlain's Merchant Shipping Bill, when he was President of the Board of Trade.



"The Government is striving to steer an even course between two extremes. We have been told that the Bill which we have brought in is the minimum which the Irish people can accept. I believe it is the maximum which any English Parliament will pass. We meet with scant consideration from those whom we are attempting to serve."

The consideration, indeed, was so scant that Mr. Parnell described the Bill as "a miserable dole." It passed in August, and from that time until October Mr. Parnell and his party stirred up agitation against it, denouncing the Government which brought it in, and raising the cry, not for "Fair Rent," but for "No Rent." The provisions of the Bill were known as the "Three F's"—Fair Rent (fixed by the Land Courts), Fixity of Tenure (a tenant could not have his rent raised again for fifteen years, nor be evicted if he paid that rent), Free Sale (the right to dispose of his interest in the holding).

The Land League, first established (in October, 1879, by Michael Davitt) to agitate in the interests of the agrarian population of Ireland for the reforms now granted by the Land Act, as well as for further modifications of the laws relating to tenants, had now changed, not only its aims, but its methods. "The original objects were legal, even praiseworthy," said Mr. Chamberlain, and therefore the Government resisted the Tory demand to suppress the League, "for the tenants of Ireland would then have had no organisation to fall back upon." But there were secret objects of the League, as well as those which the leaders avowed, and after the Land Bill had largely satisfied the original and open demands of the League, its promoters grew bolder and avowed the rest of their programme. The League was now to be used to cover and include revolutionary designs. Its secret object was to inflame the grievance, not to remove it, and to make that grievance a basis for securing national independence.

"The success of the Land Bill, the pacification of Ireland—those things would be defeated by the separatist policy which

Mr. Parnell has supported, instigated by the American-Irish, who have found the larger portion of the funds by which the agitation has been conducted, and accordingly, after the Land Bill passed, the word went forth. The cry for 'Fair Rent' had been conceded; it was abandoned, and the cry of 'No Rent' was substituted. First it was suggested, now it has been openly avowed. . . . When the League undertook in every case to supersede private judgment, and to impose its dictates by force, terrorism, and intimidation, then it became a tyranny as obnoxious to Liberals and to Liberalism as any other form of despotism."

On October 13th, 1881, Mr. Parnell with other leaders of the Land League were lodged in Kilmainham Gaol. On the 18th the League published its "No Rent" manifesto, calling on all loyal leaguers not to pay any rent till their leaders were liberated.

Arrest of  
Parnell.  
October  
1881.

On the 20th the League was proclaimed, as "an illegal and criminal association," and was nominally suppressed. But it had an efficient substitute in the shape of the "Ladies' Land League," which received and distributed funds for the work of agitation. These funds came from America, which Mr. Parnell had visited during the winter of 1880, a few months after the League was first founded. There he openly proclaimed his sympathy with the separatist policy of the Irish-Americans, whose societies (called by various names, the best known being the "Clan-na-Gael," or the "Physical Force" party) saw the value of Mr. Parnell's assistance, and faithfully supplied him with funds.

While in America, he declared that "none of us will be satisfied until we have destroyed the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England." But from that point he parted company with the American Separatists. They were not only willing, but anxious, to use dynamite, the dagger, and open rebellion to attain their object. Mr. Parnell believed that, could he only use these men and their threats as a political bogey to frighten a timorous Government, he would be able to demonstrate the absolute necessity for giving

Ireland what she wanted to keep her quiet. But he meant to get it by means of Parliament, not in spite of it. And he very nearly obtained the first part of his programme—namely, Home Rule; for during his imprisonment agrarian disorder went from bad to worse, and Mr. Chamberlain, with other Radicals, urged that coercion had not quieted Ireland. Was it not possible to start afresh, to condone much, and try, in conjunction with the leaders themselves, what conciliation would do?

It was worth a trial. But Mr. Forster, then Chief Secretary for Ireland, was entirely opposed to any such proposal, and with Lord Cowper (the Lord Lieutenant) resigned on finding that Mr. Parnell and his friends were to be released unconditionally. Their release, and the negotiations which subsequently passed between them and the Government, resulted in an understanding which has been called the "Kilmainham Treaty," an understanding which there is no reason for supposing would not have been honourably carried out on both sides, had not the whole situation been changed by the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke barely a week after the negotiations seemed to have come to a successful termination. Only from Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain could Mr. Parnell hope for real sympathy and effective co-operation in Irish affairs. Captain O'Shea wrote to them both on behalf of the Irish leader's plan for conciliation. Subjoined is Mr. Chamberlain's answer:—

*"April 17th, 1882.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"I am really very much obliged to you for your letter, and especially for the copy of your very important and interesting communication to Mr. Gladstone. I am not in a position, as you will understand, to write to you fully on the subject, but I think I may say there appears to me nothing in your proposal which does not deserve consideration. I entirely agree in your view that it is the duty of the Government to lose no opportunity of acquainting themselves with representative opinion in Ireland, and for

that purpose that we ought to welcome suggestion and criticism from every quarter and from all sections and classes of Irishmen, provided they are animated by a desire for good government and not by a blind hatred of all government whatever.

"There is one thing must be borne in mind—that if the Government and the Liberal party generally are bound to show greater consideration than they have hitherto done for Irish opinion, on the other hand the leaders of the Irish party must pay some attention to public opinion in England and in Scotland. Since the present Government have been in office they have not had the slightest assistance in this direction. On the contrary, some of the Irish Members have acted as if their object were to embitter and prejudice the English nation.

"The result is, that nothing would be easier than at the present moment to get up in every large town an anti-Irish agitation, as formidable as the anti-Jewish agitation in Russia.

"I fail to see how Irishmen or Ireland can profit by such policy, and I shall rejoice whenever the time comes that a more hopeful spirit is manifested on both sides."

Mr. Gladstone in his letter to Captain O'Shea did not join in this plain speaking about the conduct of the Irish Members and the risks they were running of alienating all English sympathy. But he was quite at one with Mr. Chamberlain in his view of the urgency for Irish reform.

"Whether there be any agreement as to the means," Mr. Gladstone wrote, "the end is of vast moment, and assuredly no resentment, personal prejudice, or false shame, or other impediment extraneous to the matter itself, will prevent the Government from treading in that path which may most safely lead to the pacification of Ireland."

This letter is a good example of Mr. Gladstone's urbane ambiguity.

But the Phoenix Park murders altered all plans, both Irish and English. Few will forget that terrible **Phoenix Park Murders.** Sunday morning (May 7th, 1882) when it became known in all the churches that Lord Frederick Cavendish,

the newly appointed Chief Secretary, and his secretary, Mr. Burke, a prominent official of the Irish Government, had been stabbed to death in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, in broad daylight on the previous afternoon.

When on Monday in the House of Commons Mr. Parnell stood up to express on the part of himself and his friends their unqualified detestation of this horrible crime, committed by men who hated the constitutional agitation with which he was associated, and who had purposely dealt the severest blow they could to his hopes for a friendly settlement of the Irish difficulty in conjunction with the Government, he was absolutely sincere in what he said. His new hopes were gone; he read coercion on every face in the House—even on the faces of those who had been most anxious to help him. Home Rule had been within sight and Separation within measurable distance. Both seemed now lost: the support of the English Radicals was withdrawn, at any rate for a time, and he was regarded as “suspect” by the “Invincibles,” who had so far supplied him with funds.

A week after he proclaimed his condemnation of the Phoenix Park murderers there was an exciting scene in the House, in which he figured. Hoping to embarrass the Government, he read the famous letter sent to Mr. Gladstone which contained his demands on behalf of the Irish party, and asserted his confidence—“a confidence shared by my colleagues—that the exertions we should be able to make strenuously and unremittingly would be effective in stopping outrages and intimidation of all kinds.”

Not unnaturally this was taken as an admission that Parnell's compact. the Nationalists could have stopped outrage and intimidation had they chosen to do so, and it looked too much like making terms with rebels to be palatable. But Mr. Parnell omitted to read that sentence in which he said that the accomplishment of his programme “*would, I feel sure, enable us to co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal party in forwarding Liberal principles and measures of general reform.*” It is supposed that the

omission was made in order that the American-Irish might not suspect his advances toward the hated English, advances which must involve some kind of co-operation in forwarding English legislation. Mr. Forster, angry and sore at Parnell's unconditional release from gaol, when he had urged that an undertaking to abstain from agitation must be the condition of his freedom, called out that the whole letter had not been read, and, handing to Captain O'Shea a copy which contained the words in italics, forced him to read the omitted passage to the House.

The Liberal leaders, according to Mr. Gladstone and as implied by Mr. Chamberlain, had treated Mr. Parnell's offer of co-operation as no part of any bargain, but as an evidence of his sincerity and good faith. The Conservatives scoffed at this view, believing that the Liberals, to forward their domestic policy, had concluded a compact with the Irish. No one had been more disappointed at the change for the worse in the prospects of remedial legislation for Ireland produced by the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish than Mr. Chamberlain, who had always regarded coercion as "an odious necessity," and who was altogether opposed to Mr. Forster on this point.

After the murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish, Mr. (afterwards Sir) George Trevelyan became Chief Secretary for Ireland. A new measure of coercion was hastily passed, and the policy of conciliation was postponed. From that time all pretence of working with the Liberal Government was put aside by Mr. Parnell and his followers; but he never for one moment relaxed his determination to get, not less, but more than had been within his reach if the Kilmainham Treaty had been carried out and the Phoenix Park murders never committed. Perhaps at the bottom of his heart he recognised that both Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain were eager to perform the most difficult task of the century and satisfy Ireland, and he was now determined to act so that they should become very shortly convinced that a settlement of the Irish question was a



political as well as a moral necessity, and that until Irish claims were conceded Imperial legislation would be stopped. The Redistribution Bill would give him a chance of capturing more seats for the Nationalists, both in Ireland and the sister kingdoms, and his party would henceforward be still more formidable alike to friend and foe. Neither side would be safe without his help, neither side could be sure of receiving it; a coalition between his enemies he contemptuously dismissed. He was too cynical a believer in the ultimate selfishness of all politicians to anticipate that any such coalition would be permanent or powerful.

Speaking at Newcastle in January, 1884, Mr. Chamberlain said :—

“Our policy is now what it has always been. We will not turn to the right or to the left, and we will not think our work completed until we have secured to Irishmen every right and every privilege which legislation has secured, or may secure, for Englishmen and Scotsmen.

“Until this has been done, it is altogether premature to despair of a cordial union between the two countries and the gradual disappearance of those bitter memories which long years of injustice and oppression have stamped so deeply on the hearts of the Irish race. . . .

“I am certain that no policy can conduce more surely to separation than a persistence in the opposition to all reasonable reforms and a stupid reliance upon brute force and coercion as the only remedy for Irish discontent.”

This, then, was Mr. Chamberlain's position as regards Irish affairs in the Parliament of 1880—1885.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *THE FALL OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF 1880—1885.*

THE BOERS 1881-1884—OUR POSITION IN EGYPT—GORDON—DEFEAT OF THE GOVERNMENT, JUNE, 1885—ATTITUDE OF THE IRISH.

THE Liberals who came into office in 1880 had, as all new Ministries have, two duties to perform. In the first place they had to take over the responsibilities incurred by their predecessors, to fulfil them as far as possible to their own satisfaction, and to minimise what they considered to have been the mistakes committed by those predecessors. Secondly, they had to fulfil the pledges given by them to the electors who returned them to power, and to set about carrying out their own programmes of reform. It is necessary to remember that both these duties are equally binding on the Government, while only one of them can be considered satisfactory—namely, the second.

It is in the performance of the first—the discharging of the responsibilities bequeathed by their predecessors, usually in foreign or colonial affairs—that the Government find their greatest embarrassment and the most dangerous pitfalls, and the Opposition the greatest opportunity for scoffing. The dignity of the Empire requires that any alteration in our foreign policy shall be made as unobtrusively as possible, and that all obligations already incurred shall be fulfilled, on the supposition that whatever our internal disagreements may be we always present an unbroken front to the world. And therefore, though the legacy left by Lord Beaconsfield's "spirited foreign policy" was not at all to the liking of

the Liberals, they were unable to reverse that policy as completely as they would have liked to do. Though anxious to set to work on domestic legislation, and unwilling to spend time or money on foreign or colonial complications, they yet found themselves involved in the Boer War, the bombardment of Alexandria, the occupation of Egypt, the war in the Soudan, the Gordon Relief Expedition, an Afghan campaign, and the Bechuanaland expedition, together with the ever-recurring difficulties of the Eastern question.

One of the most difficult problems which confronted Mr. Gladstone's Government was the settlement of the Transvaal. Sir Theophilus Shepstone had annexed that State on April 12th, 1877. Immediately afterwards, when its debts had been paid and its safety

from attacks by the surrounding blacks secured, a number of the Boers agitated against the annexation. They broke into open revolt in 1880, and defeated Sir George Colley at Majuba Hill ; but when reinforcements under Sir Evelyn Wood were in a position to enforce obedience to her Majesty's Government, and Sir Frederick Roberts with ten thousand men was at Cape Town, an armistice with the rebels was granted, and after some negotiations Mr. Gladstone gave the Transvaal back to the Boers, some of whom, three years previously, had signified their wish to become English subjects. One of their leaders, Paul Kruger, who previously had taken service under the British Government, was now elected as President. The Boers remained in dependence on England in so far as they were not allowed to enlarge their own boundaries or to conclude treaties with foreign Powers, with the sole exception of their kinsmen of the Orange Free State. Their independence was limited to the control of their internal affairs.

Mr. Gladstone's Government found the country annexed and refused to annul that annexation until the war broke out. Then, believing that Sir Theophilus Shepstone had acted against the will of the majority of the Boer people, they stopped the war and gave back the country only

a few months after Sir Garnet Wolseley had declared that "until the sun no longer shone, and the Vaal ran backwards, the flag of England would float over the Transvaal." This action was characterised by the one side as righteous and magnanimous; by the other as iniquitous and despicable, and as savouring of treachery towards loyal subjects, whether English, Dutch, or native, who were thereby handed over to the rule of the Boers who hated them.

Mr. Chamberlain followed his chief throughout in his policy in respect of the Transvaal, and though there were many men who were opposed to giving up any ground over which the Union Jack had once floated, there were few, if any, who understood the real gravity of the issues.

The further consideration of the Transvaal troubles is postponed to a later chapter. It is sufficient to **Convention of London. 1884.** add that in 1884, in consequence of President

Kruger's visit to England and the protests entered by him and his advisers against the existing Pretoria Convention, modifications were proposed and accepted which were embodied in the Convention of London, 1884. On this document the President of the South African Republic based his claim to be free from the "suzerainty" of Great Britain.

The Radical element in the Cabinet had been reinforced during the Session of 1882 by Sir Charles **Affairs in Egypt.** Dilke's appointment as President of the Local Government Board—on Mr. Bright's resignation as a protest against the bombardment of Alexandria—in July, 1882.

The occupation of Egypt followed, and our troops were fighting Arabi Pasha in the autumn. **Bombardment of Alexandria. July, 1882.** Mr. Chamberlain, when at Birmingham in the following March, said: "I believe there is not a single Member of the Government who does not deeply regret what we have thought to be the necessity for interference in Egypt."

Again, in a later speech, Birmingham, June 1885, he said:—

"The Egyptian question has brought us face to face with great interests, and a natural sensitiveness on the part of

Frenchmen. . . . [Mr. Chamberlain had just returned from a visit to Paris.] In the last article I read in the *Times* newspaper [before he left England], I was told that the limits of concession of the Government to France must, they supposed, at last have been reached. In the first article I read in the *Débats* newspaper . . . . I found the French Government assailed most bitterly for the manner in which it had yielded everything to the insolence of England. Do you not think that perhaps both Governments are wiser than these irresponsible writers in the press, who risk a breach in the friendship which ought to exist between two great nations—wiser than the politician whose recklessness endangers the peace of the world? Do you not think it possible that the two Governments may be each earnestly seeking the interests and the honour of their respective countries? . . . I attach the greatest possible importance to the French alliance. . . . I believe that, near neighbours as we are, in our continued and cordial friendship lies the best guarantee for the future happiness of both nations—and I would be sorry that any temporary misapprehension, any misrepresentation, should jeopardise the alliance, to which I attach so great importance. . . .

“Why did we go to Egypt? There are a great many people who think—in view of what has subsequently occurred—that it would have been wiser if we had kept away altogether. But then it should be borne in mind what the alternative would have been. Egypt is the highway to India and to our colonial possessions. . . .”

It was, therefore, clearly impossible to allow some other Power to step in and annex Egypt, since the French had refused to join with us in restoring order there. Two courses were open to us: either we might set up a protectorate similar to that of the French in Tunis, or we might annex Egypt as France annexed Algeria. But Mr. Gladstone's Government did not think we ought to assume the immense responsibilities of Egypt or destroy its independence.

“Above all, we did not think that it was worth our while, or desirable, or right, for such an object to risk the friendship of France, to which we attached so much value. . . . The

alternative was that we should remain in Egypt only so long as was necessary to restore order, and that then we should come away without having sought or obtained any territorial aggrandisement for ourselves."

But French jealousies were rapidly making that evacuation a dream of the future.

"One effect of this policy is to delay the evacuation . . . to postpone it, to make it difficult, and perhaps even in the last resort to make it impossible. . . .

"It cannot be tolerated after the sacrifices that we have made that our going away should be the signal for another Power to take up a preponderating position there. . . .

"We have a duty which we owe to the Egyptians—we have to provide them with some form of government which is likely to be a settled one. We have to relieve the peasants of excessive or unjust taxation, which might be a cause of discontent and trouble in the future, and we have to create some kind of native or other army which may answer for the defence of the country against external enemies and against internal disorder. These are objects, surely, in which we may seek and obtain the cordial assistance of France."

But whether that assistance were obtained or not, the Liberal Government meant to attempt to carry out both the reforms above mentioned.

In January, 1884, General Gordon had been despatched to Khartoum to arrange for the withdrawal of the Egyptian garrisons of the Soudan. Speaking in the same month, Mr. Chamberlain said he did not consider this withdrawal from the Soudan a matter for regret :—

"The occupation has been a continuous strain upon the resources of a poor country. It has increased the burdens upon the peasantry of Egypt ; and now that they are likely to be relieved of this strain . . . the Egyptian Government will be able to develop into a prosperous and self-working institution. . . .

Gordon sent  
to Soudan.  
January  
1884.

"The task is likely to be more difficult than was supposed; it will take a longer time than was anticipated. There is nothing in what has happened which makes me think that it will not ultimately, with time, patience, and discretion, succeed and be completely accomplished."

Six months after Gordon was sent out, Lord Wolseley was despatched with the Relief Expedition; but he was too late, for just a year after Gordon reached the Soudan he was murdered when the British gunboats were within sight of the city of Khartoum.

The impression produced by the death of Gordon was disastrous to the Government; between February and May after he was sent out, two votes of censure had been moved, and the Government majority in the Commons went down from forty-nine to twenty-eight, while the Lords carried their motion by one hundred votes. But in the February after his death the Government were only able to muster a majority of fourteen. Two months later a vote of credit of eleven millions was asked for, four and a half of which were to be spent in the Soudan, and the ultimate overthrow of the Government was largely due to the loss of Gordon and the mismanagement of military affairs in Egypt.

The Government were defeated on Sir Michael Hicks-Beach's resolution condemning the Budget proposals (June 8th, 1885), thirty-nine Irish Members voting against the Administration which had so bitterly disappointed them.

**Defeat of the  
Government.  
June 8th,  
1885.**

When the result was announced, an extraordinary scene took place. There was the wildest excitement in the House, and one of the Service Members afterwards remarked that he had been in various tight places in his life, but that for sheer excitement he had never seen anything to equal the state of the House of Commons when the Liberal Government were defeated. The Irish roared out "Buckshot," "Coercion," at the top of their voices, and actually howled at Mr. Gladstone. Lord Randolph Churchill leaped upon a bench, waved his hat above his head and cheered his loudest.

Ironical counter-cheers from the Liberals added to the uproar. But amid it all, Mr. Gladstone, grimly silent, sat writing his daily letter to the Queen, and conveyed at the same time the news of his own resignation. As the Members streamed out of the House, Lord Richard Grosvenor, the Chief Liberal Whip and a personal friend of Mr. Gladstone, went up to him, and after a moment's conversation the Prime Minister shook him warmly by the hand. It was generally supposed that he was taking leave of his colleague for it had several times been announced that at the end of this Session Mr. Gladstone would retire from Parliamentary life.



## CHAPTER XIX

### *THE STOP-GAP GOVERNMENT AND THE UNAUTHORISED PROGRAMME*

"LORD SALISBURY IN POWER"—THE CONSERVATIVES AND LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL—THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, JUNE—NOVEMBER—"RANSOM" AND WARRINGTON SPEECHES.

THERE were various reasons why the Liberal party was not displeased to find itself relieved of the cares of office in June, 1885. A General Election was expected in the autumn, and they would now be free to canvass the country, leaving to their opponents the full duties of winding up the Session and of dealing with the problem of coercion, the solution of which all alike seemed eager to shirk. In the autumn the Crimes Bill expired. Was it to be renewed, temporarily or permanently? Who was to have the odium of passing a fresh measure of coercion, which would inevitably mean trouble with the Nationalists and the impossibility of doing any work on the strength of which the Government could go to the country.

The Queen from Balmoral telegraphed to Mr. Gladstone to know if there were any chance of his reconsidering his resignation. The House adjourned to the 12th, and the greatest excitement and uncertainty prevailed as to what would happen.

Though the Opposition had defeated the Government, they could not command a majority in the House, and as soon as Lord Salisbury attempted to form a Cabinet he encountered all sorts of difficulties. The Liberals smiled cynically at the

position in which he found himself; as one of them put it, "The Conservatives might now clear up the mess they had made."

"Lord Randolph Churchill Upsets the Apple-Cart" was the headline of one paper a few days after the Queen sent for Lord Salisbury, and certain it is that there were many of his own party who devoutly wished "Lord Randy" had never been heard of. Lord Salisbury was credited with a secret liking for the young man's boldness and cleverness, and he followed his advice often enough to alienate many older friends and followers.

Before Mr. Gladstone actually handed over the reins of office he came down to the House and appealed to the Opposition to keep Parliament together that they might get on with the Seats Bill. Sir Stafford Northcote (the Leader of the Opposition), who had been privately consulted, was in favour of so doing, but while Mr. Gladstone was urging his view, Lord Randolph Churchill handed a slip of paper to the Conservative Whip for Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. Sir Michael passed it on to Sir Stafford, who, on replying, said that he had originally been in favour of Mr. Gladstone's suggestion, but that he had now changed his mind. The incident was significant. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach openly joined Mr. (now Sir) John Gorst and Lord Randolph Churchill in throwing over his old leader. As Lord Iddesleigh, Sir Stafford soon took his seat in the Upper House, and the "old gang," as Lord Randolph designated them, was broken up. Though all was supposed to be amicably arranged and the leader of the Fourth party (Lord Randolph Churchill) was in the Cabinet as Secretary of State for India, a hitch occurred at the last moment which nearly reversed the whole position of affairs.

Lord Salisbury applied to Mr. Gladstone for a pledge that the new Ministry should not be embarrassed by the Opposition, intimating that if the new Budget proposals were opposed, the Government on their part would declare that the Redistribution of Seats Bill must be dropped. The meaning

of this threat was plain. If the Redistribution Bill were not passed, the General Election would be fought on the old registers, and the two million new voters not being registered would be unable to use their votes. Such a manœuvre was characterised as an outrage on the newly enfranchised electors and a breach of Parliamentary faith.

Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke must have refused to join Mr. Gladstone in any such pledge. There was quite enough bitterness among the Radicals over the Medical Relief Bill, by which the Tories had managed to disqualify a large number of the new voters. The opposition offered to it, especially by Mr. Chamberlain, was so strong that the new Government were obliged to modify some of its provisions. The Radicals were not in a mood to grant favours.

Early in June, 1885, Mr. Chamberlain announced his intention of going to Scotland, and possibly to Ireland, on an electioneering campaign, in which he set forth what was afterwards known as his "Unauthorised Programme."

The four items of the programme were :—Free Schools, brought forward from the previous programme ;  
The Unauthorised Programme. 1885. Small Holdings, a part of the Free Land account ; Graduated Taxation, and Local Government.

All the items of this programme have in a measure been carried out. It is interesting to note that it was too advanced for the men who soon turned upon its author and pronounced him a Tory at heart. The greater part of it was carried out by a Conservative Government, which, however, was constrained by force of circumstances over which they had little control, to walk in the paths of reform previously sacred to Liberals and Radicals.

Mr. Chamberlain's programme would have been better  
"Ransom" Speech, Birmingham, January, 1885. received had it not been for a speech, known as the "Ransom" speech, delivered in Birmingham in January of the same year. It was supposed to be an out-and-out attack on the rights of property, but it might also be described as an out-and-out

sermon on the duties of those who enjoy the privileges of property, and a solemn warning that if they would not discharge their duties, the time was coming when their privileges could be no longer guaranteed to them.

Domestic legislation, said Mr. Chamberlain, in future would be more concerned with social subjects than had hitherto been the case. Those men, who, having annexed everything that is worth having, expect others to be content with the crumbs that fall from their table, should remember that life was not always arranged thus.

“When our social arrangements first began to shape themselves, every man was born into the world with natural rights—with a right to share in the great inheritance of the community, with a right to a part of the land of his birth. But all these rights have passed away. . . . Private ownership has taken the place of these communal rights, and this system has become so interwoven with our habits and usages—it has been so sanctioned by law and protected by custom—that it might be very difficult, and perhaps impossible, to reverse it.”

Nevertheless, private property, Mr. Chamberlain considered, would probably continue to enjoy its monopoly of communal rights.

“But then, I ask, what ransom will property pay for the security which it enjoys? What substitute will it find for the natural rights which have ceased to be recognised? Society is banded together to protect itself against the instincts of those men who would make very short work of private ownership if they were left alone. That is all very well, but I maintain that society owes these men something more than mere toleration in return for the restrictions it places upon their liberty of action. . . . I think in the future we shall hear a great deal more about the obligations of property, and we shall not hear quite so much about its rights. . . . Is it an essential condition of private ownership in land that the agricultural labourers of this country, alone of civilised countries, should be entirely

divorced from the soil they till, that they should be driven into the towns to compete with you for work, and to lower the rate of wages, and that alike in town and country the labouring population should be huddled into dwellings unfit for man or beast, where the conditions of common decency are impossible, and where they lead directly to disease, intemperance, and crime? These are questions which I hope you will ask at the next election, and to which you will demand an answer. . . .

"You must look for the cure in legislation, laying the heaviest burdens on the shoulders best able to bear them [Graduated Taxation]—legislation which will, in some degree at any rate, replace the labourer on the soil, and find employment for him without forcing him into competition with the artisans of the towns [Small Holdings]—legislation which will give a free education to every child in the land."

In reply to this speech, the *Times* said this doctrine of rights was "pernicious nonsense." Mr. Chamberlain, therefore, a few days later at Ipswich asked:—

"What insurance will wealth find it to its advantage to provide against the risks to which it is undoubtedly  
**Ipswich.** subject? . . . .

"Let us understand each other," he concluded. ". . . I have never supposed you could equalise the capacities and conditions of men. The idler, the drunkard, the fool, the criminal, must bear the brunt of their defects. The strong and the able man will always be first in the race. But what I say is, that the community as a whole, co-operating for the benefit of all, may do something to add to the sum of human happiness, may do something to make the life of all its citizens, and above all the poorest of them, somewhat better, somewhat nobler, somewhat happier."

"The *Times*," said Mr. Chamberlain at Hackney in July, 1885, "did me the honour to misrepresent me. . . .  
**Hackney.** Lord Salisbury denounced me, Mr. Goschen lectured me, the Duke of Argyll scolded me, and the *Spectator* newspaper preached at me."

But the Conservatives apparently approved of part of

his programme, for they themselves proposed to remedy the injustice of the Medical Relief Bill.

"I want to know how far they will go with me. If I denounce the State Church, will they disestablish it? If I call for free schools, will they abolish school fees? If I condemn pensions, will they relinquish their own?"

"After the debate the other night a Member of the House of Commons came up to me and said: 'My dear fellow, pray be careful in what you say, for if you were to speak disrespectfully of the Ten Commandments, I believe that Balfour would bring in a Bill immediately to repeal them.'"

"They have," he complained at Warrington, "appropriated every item of my programme. They claim it as their own, and they have stripped me of my policy and left me bare and forlorn till I can invent another, which they will no doubt steal in turn. . . . I do not complain of the theft, but I am distressed at the ingratitude of its perpetrators.

"The Conservatives," he said on another occasion, "were obliged to carry on the Stop-gap Government by doing 'Tory work in a Radical uniform.'"

"One man only had been consistent—Lord Randolph Churchill. He was a Tory-Democrat in opposition, he is a Tory-Democrat in office. Why, this man is doing, in the heart of the Tory citadel, with the rarest audacity and courage, the work we have vainly attempted to do from the outside. I admire and I am amazed at his audacity and courage and at his success."

Mr.  
Chamberlain  
on Lord  
Randolph  
Churchill.

But Mr. Chamberlain had no admiration for his colleagues who were being "dragged at the tail of Lord Randolph's policy."

When Mr. Chamberlain realised the inadequacy of the official programme, he abandoned any hesitation he may have felt in "dictating a policy for the party," and produced his unauthorised programme, which met with far greater favour among the people than that of the party leaders, and in the counties especially was a warm and generous support given to the man who had been largely instrumental

in obtaining the vote for the agricultural labourers. The Warrington speech at Warrington, in which he set forth his new policy, excited violent hostility from some members of his own party, and the *Times* compared him to the man who destroyed the Temple of Diana at Ephesus for the sake of notoriety. Of the official programme Mr. Chamberlain said :—

“Local government and the cheapening of the transfer of land are good things—most excellent things! I do not know whether they are of a nature to cause the hot blood of a Whig to course rapidly through his veins, but I must admit that I do not expect they will excite the passionate fervour which I desire to see among the people. I think we shall have to go a little farther before we can do that. . . . I received a letter from a great Whig landowner in Scotland, a letter in which he said that if the programme of the Liberal party were confined to these points, he for one would not dare to face his constituents.”

The political Rip Van Winkles had to learn that the world had moved on while they had been slumbering.

“But now that we have a Government of the people by the people, we will go on and make it the Government for the people, in which all shall co-operate in order to secure to every man his natural rights, his right to existence, and to a fair enjoyment of it.

“I shall be told to-morrow that this is Socialism. I have learnt not to be afraid of words that are flung in my face instead of argument. Of course it is Socialism! The Poor Law is Socialism, the Education Act is Socialism, the greater part of municipal work is Socialism, and every kindly act of legislation by which the community has sought to discharge its responsibilities and its obligations to the poor is Socialism. But it is none the worse for that. . . . I do not pretend that for every grievance a remedy will be found. But we must try experiments, as we are bound to do. Let us continue to pursue our work with this object, and if we fail, let us try again and again till we succeed.”

"How," he asks his opponents at Glasgow, "do you propose to help the poor? . . .

"If you have a better way" [than was set forth in the unauthorised programme] "we shall joyfully hear of it. But for my part, neither sneers, nor abuse, nor opposition, shall induce me to accept as the will of the Almighty and the unalterable dispensation of His Providence a state of things under which millions lead sordid, hopeless, and monotonous lives, without pleasure in the present and without prospect in the future. The issue is for you and the new constituencies. The people must find the solution, and for my part I have so much confidence that I believe what the wise and learned have failed to accomplish the poor and lowly will achieve for themselves.

Glasgow.  
September  
15th, 1885.

"We met, we crushed the evil powers;  
A nobler task must now be ours:  
Their victims, maimed and poor, to feed,  
And bind the bruised and broken reed.  
Lord! let the human storm be stilled,  
Lord! let the million mouths be filled,  
Let labour cease to toil in vain,  
Let England be herself again."

From January to December, in the many speeches that he had made throughout the country, Mr. Chamberlain had been urging the obligations of the Government towards the poor, especially in the direction of giving them a chance to become yeomen—owners of the soil. There is even a hint of the subject which was to occupy so much of his thoughts at a later time—namely, old age pensions. He took every opportunity of talking with the agricultural labourers; he visited the crofters; he found that the Wiltshire men talked nothing but politics, now they had the vote, till the landlords declared "it was sickening."

One reason why the Warrington speech attracted so much attention was that in it Mr. Chamberlain bluntly refused to make any terms with Mr. Parnell unless he abandoned all idea of separation for Ireland.

"Now, what is Mr. Parnell's programme? He says that in his opinion the time has come to abandon altogether all



attempts to obtain further remedial measures or subsidiary reforms, and to concentrate the efforts of the Irish representatives upon the securing of a separate and independent Parliament, which is to consist of a single Chamber, and whose first object it will be to put a protective duty against all English manufactures.

"Then he says, in the second place, that he expects Whig and Tory will vie with one another in helping him to a settlement on his own terms; and he says in the last place that if any party seek to make this object impossible, he and his friends will make all things impossible for them.

"Well, gentlemen, I am not a Whig, and I am certainly not a Tory. But speaking for myself, I say that if these alone are the terms upon which Mr. Parnell's support is to be obtained, I will not enter into competition for it.

"This new programme of Mr. Parnell's involves a great extension of anything we have hitherto understood by Home Rule, . . . and if this claim were conceded, we might as well for ever abandon all hope of maintaining a United Kingdom. . . . But it is said by him that justice requires we should concede to Irishmen the absolute right of self-government. I would reply that it is a right which must be considered in relation to the security and welfare of the other countries in juxtaposition to which Ireland is placed, and with whose interests hers are indissolubly linked.

"I cannot admit that five millions of Irishmen have any greater inherent right to govern themselves without regard to the rest of the United Kingdom than the five millions of the Metropolis.

"God has made us neighbours, and I would to Heaven that our rulers had made us friends. But as neighbours, neither the one nor the other has any right so to rule his household as to be a source of annoyance or danger to the other.

"Subject to that limitation, I for my part would concede the greatest possible measure of local government to the Irish people, as I would concede it also to the English and the Scots."

At the conclusion of his campaign, he offered a few words of personal explanation of his policy :—

"These are the proposals, simple, moderate, and practical,

which . . . have earned for me, from Lord Iddesleigh, the title of 'Jack Cade.' . . . Whether they will be included in the programme of the Liberal party or not, does not depend upon me. It does not depend on any individual leader, however influential and highly placed he may be ; it rests with the constituencies themselves and their representatives. . . .

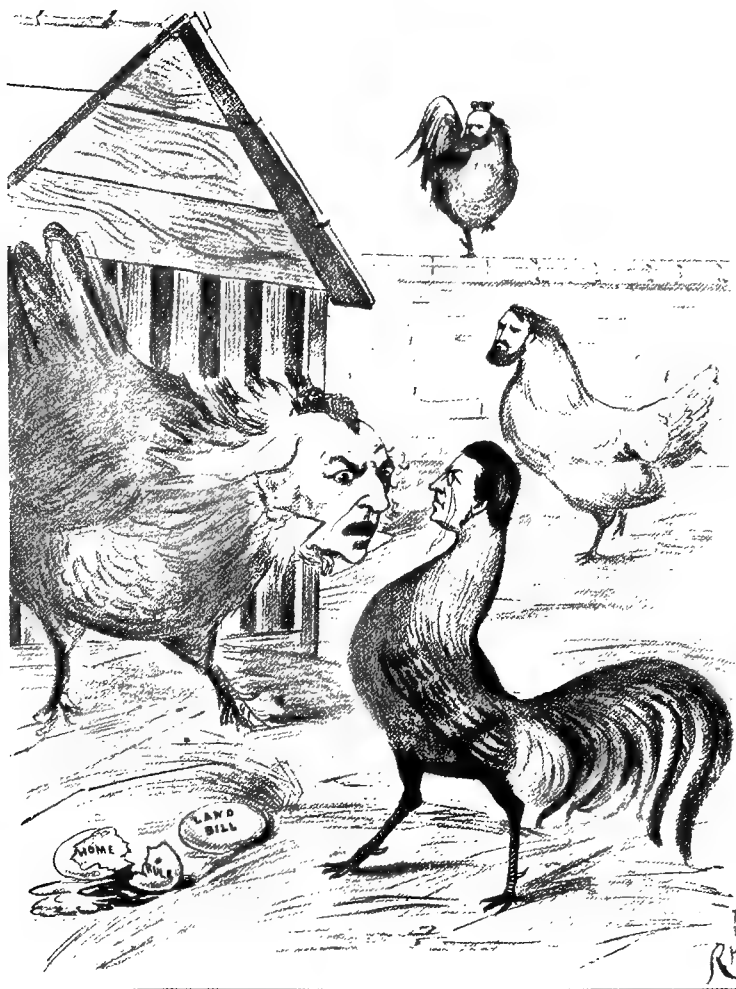
London.  
September  
24th, 1885.  
" If I am right, these views will find adequate expression, and they will receive due weight and attention from the party leaders. If I am disappointed, then my course is clear. I cannot press the views of the minority against the conclusions of the majority of the party ; but it would be, on the other hand, dishonourable in me, and lowering to the high tone which ought to prevail in public life, if I, having committed myself personally, as I have done, to the expediency of these proposals, were to take my place in any Government which excluded them from its programme. . . . I have not found official life so free from care that I should be unwilling once more to fall back into the ranks."

This unmistakable declaration of the only terms upon which he was willing to remain in the Cabinet was received in some quarters with sneers and sarcastic comments as to the high price the Member for Birmingham put upon his allegiance.

Bradford.  
October 1st,  
1885.  
" I am accused of dictating terms to the Liberal party and to its great leader, because I have said I could not consent to enter any Government which deliberately excluded from its programme those reforms which I have been advocating as of prime importance throughout the length and the breadth of the land. I may be mistaken in the weight I attach to these proposals. . . .

" But that I should purchase place and office by the abandonment of the opinions I have expressed, that I should put my principles in my pocket, and that I should consent to an unworthy silence on those matters to which I have professed to attach so great an importance, would be a degradation which no honourable man could regard with complacency or satisfaction. . . .

At the beginning of the year, when rendering an account of his Ministerial work to his constituents, he said to them :—



## **EASTER EGGS.**

**THE GRAND OLD HEN:**—See what beautiful Eggs I've laid!

**THE GRAND YOUNG BANTAM:**—Yes, and see how I've smashed one of them.

From a cartoon which appeared in the *Birmingham Owl*, Easter 1886.



"I have now been your Member for nearly nine years, and **Birmingham**, during the greater part of that time I have had **January, 1885**, the honour of a seat in the Government. I have had to make great claims upon your patience and indulgence, and you have never failed to respond with a generosity which is one of the most striking characteristics of great popular constituencies. In the course of that time you will easily understand I have sometimes found it difficult, as one of the Radical Members in a Liberal Government, to reconcile the loyalty which I owe to my colleagues and to the party at large with the strenuous and constant promotion of the principles which I am supposed especially to represent. I have had at times to reserve and sometimes even to sacrifice my opinion: perhaps I may have disappointed my constituents; but it has been, in my opinion, necessary, in order not to bring about a division which might injure our common cause, or which might embarrass the leader whose unsurpassed ability and long-tried devotion to the people's service has earned for him their undying regard and esteem.

"And now I accept your reception as the proof that in your opinion, at all events, I have been faithful to the trust you have reposed in me, and that I have retained the friendship and support without which public life would indeed be an intolerable burden."

The unauthorised programme was received with much satisfaction in Birmingham. Dr. Dale, the keenest and certainly the most influential politician in Birmingham next to Mr. Chamberlain, wrote to him at the close of his campaign, saying:—

"I congratulate you very heartily on your recent speeches in the North; apart from the substance of them, which was admirable, the form—in which I include all the rhetorical elements—reached a level which I think you never touched before, and which I hope you will keep.

"It is a great thing for a man to make an advance of that kind when he has touched fifty.

"This criticism is rather presumptuous for a person like myself to offer to an ex-Cabinet Minister; but the delight one has in watching the growing strength of one's comrades remains when a comrade has become a chief, and when one has lost the right to speak to him in this way."

## CHAPTER XX

### *RUMOURS OF HOME RULE*

AUTUMN, 1885—FEBRUARY, 1886

RETURN OF THE SEVEN MEMBERS, BIRMINGHAM ELECTIONS,  
NOVEMBER 1885—RUMOURS OF HOME RULE—DEFEAT OF LORD  
SALISBURY, JANUARY 1886—EVENTS OF THE SESSION.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S part as a Minister during his five years of office had been played to the satisfaction of his constituents. They were proud of the work he had accomplished and of the attention which his opinions commanded, whether expressed in the House of Commons, or in his *Fortnightly* and other articles, or in the speeches which set forth the unauthorised programme. The new voters, who had at last obtained full political rights, largely owing to his continuous efforts on their behalf, were looking eagerly for the elections of November and December, 1885, as the moment for marking Birmingham's unmistakable approval of "Our Joe" and his policy.

Mr. Chamberlain was aware that no Minister could be so free as the independent Member, and that to his constituents he might seem to be at times "falling away from grace" in respect of fiery denunciations of a lukewarm Liberal policy, but he pointed out that "we Radicals do not think it necessary to upset the coach every time the pace does not come up to our expectations. . . . It is a mistake to think that independence can only be asserted in isolation."

Under the new Redistribution Act, Birmingham returned seven instead of three members to Parliament; they were

Bright, Chamberlain, Dixon, Kenrick, Powell Williams, Cook, and Broadhurst. Mr. Chamberlain was opposed by a "working-man" candidate, who was defeated by 2,764 votes, Mr. Chamberlain's majority being the largest in the borough: he polled 5,419 votes; among them, curiously enough, was that of a woman who presented herself at one of the booths and demanded to vote.<sup>1</sup>

"I am on the register," she said; "Susannah Perks is my name; it's right enough!"

The officer in charge looked, and the name "Susannah Perks" was certainly entered. A hurried consultation took place, and an election agent considered that Susannah Perks might be allowed to vote. It is believed that Mr. Chamberlain obtained her suffrage, and she left the booth in the proud position of being the one woman in the town who had recorded her vote for a borough Member.

The excitement of this election was so great that it is difficult to describe it adequately. All the candidates were opposed; Lord Randolph Churchill was fighting John Bright; and Henry Matthews, Q.C., Alderman Kenrick. Broadhurst, the working-man Member, was opposed by a local Tory brewer of great wealth and influence. On the night of the election thousands of people congregated in the great square of which the Council House and Town Hall form two sides. The counting of votes was going on, and as the results were known they were posted on huge boards, black figures on a white ground, that could easily be read in the glare of the surrounding lamps. These boards were exhibited on the Town Hall. As return after return was posted, and it became evident that another and yet another Liberal had been elected, the people went almost mad with excitement, and when after an interval the seventh and last result was known, the scene was indescribable.

Over at the Liberal Club, which commanded a view of the

<sup>1</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post.*

The General  
Election.  
November  
and  
December,  
1885.

Elections in  
Birmingham,  
November.  
1885.

square, now black with the people, now white for a moment as all faces were turned in one direction, the results were coming in from the country, and the members were crowding round, cheering each fresh victory. It was a great night at the club. "We often say that was the culminating point of its glory," said a member. Many ladies were present, and when at last Henry Broadhurst appeared after a hard fight, they gathered round to shake hands and congratulate him. As for Alderman Kenrick, the cheering crowd met him at the foot of the stairs and carried him shoulder-high into the dining-room.

But the results of the election as a whole were not satisfactory for the Liberal party; they only numbered 335, as against 335—Conservatives, 249, and Irish, 86, combined. What would happen in the present balance of parties? If the Irish made common cause with the Liberals (86+335), the Conservatives would be hopelessly beaten, though they were of course nominally in power (just as the Stop-gap Government had been), and Lord Salisbury had not yet resigned. But if a Tory-Irish coalition took place, though nominally they would equal the Liberals in strength, it was more than probable that at a critical moment there would be deserters from the Tory camp disgusted with the extravagant demands of their new allies.

No overtures to the Irish party had been made officially from either side, though it was said that they had been made unofficially by Lord Carnarvon to Mr. Parnell and had been disavowed by Lord Salisbury. The truth of the various rumours then afloat will probably never be known.

On December 14th it was announced that the Prime Minister was engaged in considering a scheme for a large measure of local government in Ireland. But this piece of news, true or false, was altogether thrown into the shade by the *Standard* of December 17th, which published an account of a supposed scheme of Home Rule drawn up by Mr. Gladstone. It was not likely that

**Rumours of  
Home Rule.  
Autumn, 1885.**



Mr. Gladstone would have first communicated his views upon such a subject to the *Standard*, but his repudiation of those attributed to him by that paper was not of a nature to relieve the anxiety that the report had caused. The outlines of the scheme were as follow:—

1. The unity of the Empire, authority of the Crown, and supremacy of Imperial Parliament were to be maintained.
2. An Irish Parliament entrusted with legislative and administrative powers would be granted.
3. Ireland would contribute to the Imperial Exchequer.
4. The rights of minorities would be safeguarded.
5. The Crown would reserve the right to nominate a certain number of the Irish Members.

On the evening of the day when the *Standard's* summary of the Bill appeared, Birmingham Liberals were celebrating, by a banquet, the return of the seven Liberal Members, and Mr. Chamberlain's comments on the alleged policy were eagerly looked for.

"I see in the papers," he said, "some account of negotiations which are reported to have been proceeding between the leaders of the Liberal party in England and Mr. Parnell. I have had no part in any negotiations; I have expressed no approval of any scheme, and I think it very likely that the rumours which affect other prominent members of the Liberal party may be equally groundless. . . .

"Mr. Parnell, has alienated and embittered every section of the Liberal party, by his cynical alliance with the Tories.

"Let him settle accounts with his new friends; let him test their sincerity and goodwill, and if he finds he has been deceived, he will approach the Liberal party in a spirit of reason and conciliation . . . .

"As to Mr. Gladstone, we know what his opinion is from his public utterances. He has again and again said that the first duty of Liberal statesmen is to maintain the integrity of the Empire and the supremacy of the Crown. Subject to that, he is prepared to give the largest possible measure of local government that could be conceived or proposed.

"Well, I entirely agree with those principles, and I have so much faith in the experience and patriotism of Mr.

December  
17th, 1886.

Gladstone that I cannot doubt that if he should ever see his way to propose any scheme of arrangement, I shall be able conscientiously to give it my humble support. But it is due to the Irish party to say that all sections of the Liberal party, Radicals as much as Whigs, are determined that the integrity of the Empire shall be a reality and not an empty phrase."

If the Irish expected to receive Home Rule from the Conservatives, they were soon undeceived. The Meeting of Parliament. Lord Salisbury's Defeat, January, 1886. Queen's Speech intimated that coercion was not yet done with, and by the end of January the Chief Secretary for Ireland (Mr. W. H. Smith) stated that a new Coercion Act and an extension of Lord Ashbourne's Land Purchase Act would be asked for. That was sufficient for the Irish, and two days later they followed the Liberals into the Lobby and voted for Mr. Jesse Collings's amendment to the Address, which regretted that no measures giving allotments to labourers had been announced. The Government were in fact defeated on "three acres and a cow," but the significance of their defeat lay in the attitude of the House towards the Irish question. For while the Irish joined the Liberals against the Government, Lord Hartington, Mr. Goschen, and sixteen other Liberals voted *against their party* and with the Government. They feared that Mr. Gladstone was about to propose Home Rule, and they would not do anything that would bring him into power. The true meaning of their action was at the moment scarcely understood, but it was evident that neither they nor Mr. Bright would be willing to join the new Administration.

It was strange to find a Gladstone Cabinet including Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Morley, and excluding John Bright, Lord Hartington, and Mr. Forster. Mr. Chamberlain went to the Local Government Board as its President, with Mr. Jesse Collings as his Under-Secretary; Lord Aberdeen was the new Viceroy of Ireland, and John Morley the Chief Secretary.

On February 1st Mr. Gladstone was again in office and the Home Rule crisis had actually begun. From this time the phrase "Home Rule" had a new significance. So far, it had meant extended local government for Ireland, together with a generous settlement of co-related questions, except for the extreme Irish party, who always understood by it something more or less akin to Separation. During the winter of 1885-6 Mr. Gladstone imported into the term a meaning it had not previously borne for Liberals, and one which Mr. Chamberlain had no intention of expressing when he used it. Since Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy was announced Home Rule has generally been taken to mean a separate Parliament and a separate Cabinet for Ireland.

That Mr. Gladstone's offer to Parnell was unexpected even by his own party, may be gathered from the newspaper comments on his supposed policy during the autumn and early winter. That of the *Daily Chronicle*, afterwards a thick-and-thin supporter of Gladstonian Home Rule and the bitterest opponent of the Unionist party, may be quoted here :—

"Reports are current that Mr. Gladstone contemplates the most extreme measure of Home Rule consistent with the integrity of the Empire. It is astounding to learn that the Liberal leader is determined to adopt a course which will, if successful, place lawlessness in power and displace the Queen's authority in Ireland. *Moreover, we are convinced that the Liberal party as a whole would decline to support Mr. Gladstone in any attempt of this kind.*"

The *Economist* said :—

"Mr. Gladstone rarely goes quite beyond the plans his followers are prepared to accept, and if Parnell proposes *Separation*, he will be refused by both parties, and his dream will vanish for ever."

It was a strange position for Mr. Parnell. At the moment he was asking nothing ; yet he was about to have everything

offered to him. The prospects of Ireland, he said, were never brighter than at that hour. Four years before, when liberated from Kilmainham, he had found Mr. Gladstone willing to hold out a hand to Ireland. But just when order might have been sufficiently restored to enable him to do so, came the Phoenix Park murders, and for the time all conciliation was replaced by coercion. Now how changed his position! He was quietly waiting to see which party would satisfy his demands, sure that from one or the other he would get a substantial instalment of his wishes. With a cynical smile he watched the fluctuations of feeling for and against Home Rule, and the hurried, anxious consultations as to how little it would be safe to offer him and how much the country would be willing to give in order to settle the dreaded Irish question.

The following table may make the events of this Session clearer :—

#### TABLE OF DATES, 1886—1887.

Jan. 1886.	Lord Salisbury is defeated. Mr Gladstone accepts office.
Feb. 1st.	Mr. Chamberlain accepts Presidency of the Local Government Board in Mr. Gladstone's Administration.
Mar. 15th.	Mr. Chamberlain's resignation.
„ 27th.	Resignation accepted.
April 8th.	Home Rule Bill introduced.
„ 9th.	Mr. Chamberlain's explanation to the House of Commons (continued on 16th).
„ 14th.	Loyal and Patriotic Union formed. Opera House meeting.
„ 16th.	Land Purchase Bill introduced.
„ 21st.	Mr. Chamberlain's speech to the Two Thousand at Birmingham.
May 1st.	Mr. Gladstone's manifesto.
„ 5th.	National Federation meeting; the Federation supports Mr. Gladstone.
„ 10th.	Second reading Home Rule Bill moved,

May 12th.	Mr. Chamberlain's meeting—32 Members with him.
„ 14th.	Lord Hartington's meeting—64 Members with him.
„ 15th.	Lord Salisbury's meeting; alternative policy decided.
„ 27th.	Mr. Gladstone's meeting at the Foreign Office.
„ 31st.	Conference between Mr. Chamberlain and the Unionists, Lord Hartington and the Liberals.
June 1st.	Mr. Chamberlain speaks against Home Rule (second reading).
„ 7th.	Rejection second reading: Votes 343 to 313 (94 Liberals with Mr. Chamberlain).
„ 11th.	Mr. Chamberlain's manifesto.
„ 17th.	Inauguration National Radical Union.
„ 19th.	Election campaign begins. Speech to constituents at Birmingham.
„ 25th.	Dissolution.
July 3rd.	Concluding speech to constituents. Elections.
Aug. 5th.	Parliament meets. Lord Salisbury takes office.
Sept. 21st.	Parnell's Tenant Relief Bill thrown out.
Oct. 17th.	Plan of campaign announced.
Dec.	Lord Randolph Churchill's resignation.
Jan. 1887.	Round Table Conference on Irish affairs.

## CHAPTER XXI

### *HOME RULE IN THE CABINET*

FEBRUARY, 1886—APRIL, 1886

FEBRUARY 1886—APRIL 1886—MR. GLADSTONE'S MINISTRY—MR. CHAMBERLAIN BECOMES PRESIDENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD—HIS RESIGNATION—THE HOME RULE BILL—FIRST READING—MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S EXPLANATION IN THE HOUSE.

IT is not the *pros* and *cons* of Home Rule for Ireland, but Mr. Chamberlain's share in the events which followed upon Mr. Gladstone's introduction of a Home Rule Bill, and the reason of his revolt against it, that are the concern of this book.

The greatness of the issues at stake was not immediately realised ; for that reason the question of Home Rule was treated for a time as a personal one between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain, and defence and abuse of the leaders were freely indulged in by both sides. But Mr. Chamberlain at once apprehended the gravity of the situation, though for a time he cherished a hope that Mr. Gladstone understood the seriousness of the objections offered to his Bill, and would make such modifications in his Irish policy as would admit of the Liberal party remaining a united body.

Mr. Chamberlain's attitude towards Mr. Gladstone throughout the whole Home Rule contest was governed by his belief that Home Rule as proposed by Mr. Gladstone and his followers, not only led up to, but ultimately entailed the separation of Ireland from England and the disintegration of the Empire. For Mr. Chamberlain the question

The Real  
Issue at  
Stake.

at issue was one of loyalty, not to a chief or to a party but to the Empire. He and those who followed him now stood at the parting of the ways. By leaving Mr. Gladstone's administration they sacrificed their early associations with Liberal triumphs, their brilliant hopes of future reform, and their present position as members of a powerful party. By following Mr. Gladstone and consenting to his Irish policy they could retain all these things. But they believed that they would thereby imperil the existence of their country as a great nation, and risk the dismemberment of the Empire.

This belief was not, with Mr. Chamberlain, a new one. In 1881 he had said he could not admit the union to be a grievance or the separation of Ireland from England an open question. If separated, "the two countries would be a standing menace one to the other; sooner or later the conditions would be intolerable. We should have to recommence the struggle anew, and Ireland would have to be reconquered, or England would be ruined." Separation was, in Mr. Chamberlain's opinion, the ultimate issue of any form of Home Rule which did not maintain the effective supremacy of the Crown and the integrity of the Empire, and in his speech on the first reading of the Home Rule Bill he declared: "I am not prepared to take that risk in order to promote what is, in my judgment, a thinly veiled scheme of separation."

The great question now was, could a Home Rule Bill be devised which would satisfy the Irish and be consistent with the honour of the party which granted it? Mr. Chamberlain believed that the Irish people might be satisfied, but not their leader, since he had raised his terms. Mr. Gladstone expected to content Mr. Parnell with less than he asked, and to extort from his own party more than they had ever yet been willing to give. But the Kilmainham Treaty had given Mr. Parnell an inch; he was now determined to take an ell.

Mr. Gladstone's offer to Mr. Chamberlain of a seat in his Cabinet was not accepted without considerable hesitation, and Mr. Chamberlain reserved to himself the right to

dissent from the forthcoming scheme of Home Rule ;  
 Mr. Chamber- the acceptance of office was not to imply accep-  
 lain accepts tance of a Bill which had not yet been set forth.  
 Office con-  
 ditionally. He wrote as follows :—

"40, PRINCE'S GARDENS, S.W.,

"January 30th, 1886.

"MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,—

"I have availed myself of the opportunity you have kindly afforded me to consider further your offer of a seat in your Government.

"I recognise the justice of your view that the question of Ireland is paramount to all others, and must first engage your attention. The statement of your intention to examine whether it is practicable to comply with the wishes of the Irish people, as testified by the return of eighty-five representatives of the Nationalist Party, does not go beyond your previous public declarations, while the conditions which you attach to the possibility of such compliance seem to me adequate, and are also in accordance with your repeated public utterances.

"But I have already thought it due to you to say that, according to my present judgment, it will not be found possible to reconcile these conditions with the establishment of a National Legislative Body sitting in Dublin, and I have explained my own preference for an attempt to come to terms with the Irish members on a basis of a more limited scheme of Local Government, coupled with proposals for a settlement of the Land, and perhaps also of the Education question. You have been kind enough, after hearing these opinions, to repeat your request that I should join your Government, and you have explained that, in this case, I shall retain 'unlimited liberty of judgment and rejection' on any scheme that may ultimately be proposed, and that the full consideration of such minor proposals as I have referred to, as an alternative to any larger arrangement, will not be excluded by you.

"On the other hand, I have no difficulty in assuring you of my readiness to give an unprejudiced examination to any more extensive proposals that may be made, with an anxious desire that the results may be more favourable than I am at present able to anticipate. In the circumstances, and with



the most earnest hope that I may be able in any way to assist you in your difficult work, I beg to accept the offer you have made to submit my name to her Majesty for a post in the new Government.

"I am, my dear Mr. Gladstone,

"Yours sincerely,

"J. CHAMBERLAIN."

From this letter three things are clear :

1. Mr. Chamberlain expected that the proposed inquiry with regard to Home Rule would be made by Mr. Gladstone (presumably together with his Cabinet), and that then a measure would be drafted embodying the result of their deliberations.

2. That in his judgment a National Legislative Body in Dublin could not safely be granted.

3. That he retained "unlimited liberty of judgment and rejection" of any Home Rule scheme which Mr. Gladstone might put forward.

Mr. Chamberlain's own Home Rule policy as advocated in 1881, in 1885, and throughout the controversy may be very briefly recapitulated here. He wished—

1. To establish a complete system of popular local government, possibly with a national elective council, and to secure the full representation of Irish opinion on all matters of purely Irish concern.

2. To reform the Land Laws in the interests (chiefly) of the tenant, and especially by the encouragement of purchase by the tenant.

3. To develop Irish resources, especially agriculture.

4. To maintain the effective supremacy of the Imperial Government, and ensure obedience to the law and the fulfilment of Ireland's Imperial obligations.

When Mr. Gladstone's scheme for Home Rule came before the Cabinet, Mr. Chamberlain noted with surprise that there was no hint of any inquiry. The scheme was full-fledged, drawn up, it is said, with the aid only of Sir R. Hamilton. The Cabinet was not consulted, though Mr. Morley knew

of the scope of the Bill. The Land Purchase Bill, involving by its provisions an enormous expenditure of English money on behalf of a country no longer to be completely controlled by the Imperial Parliament, was introduced first in the Cabinet and then followed by the Home Rule Bill. This order was reversed in the House.

Mr. Chamberlain gave a review of the events of this time a few months later during the ensuing campaign at Birmingham :—

“At the last General Election you know that the very idea of Home Rule was scouted by the vast majority of the Liberal party ; not by me, because I have always been a Home Ruler. . . . Well, during the election in Birmingham I do not remember that I had any occasion whatever to allude to the Irish question. I believe that every one of our candidates declared himself unable to accept the Irish demands [as stated by Mr. Parnell].  
 “If he did not do so, how was it that the Irish vote was given against us?”

The Irish vote went against the Liberals all over the kingdom and nearly lost them their majority—a sure sign that the party as a whole was not prepared to give Home Rule in the sense in which it was offered a few months later by Mr. Gladstone.

“You will remember the circumstances under which the present Government was formed. The Prime Minister did me the honour to invite me to take a place in that Government, and he offered me in the first instance the great position of First Lord of the Admiralty, a position with a large salary and with an official residence, which are supposed to be worth together something like £5,000 a year.

Is it not rather a curious thing that I—who am supposed to be animated by the paltriest and basest motives—that I refused this great position, chiefly because I thought it was hardly congenial or consistent with a Radical's position that he should occupy the headship of one of the great spending and fighting offices of the State. And I preferred to accept the lowest office

**His Reasons  
for Taking  
Office.**

in the Cabinet—an office lower even than that which I had filled before at the Board of Trade—and I accepted it because I thought as President of the Local Government Board that I might be able to do something to carry out the policy which you and I had so earnestly supported before the General Election. But I told Mr. Gladstone at the time I took office . . . that I did not believe it would be possible to establish a Parliament in Dublin and at the same time to maintain the conditions which Mr. Gladstone himself had laid down as necessary and essential. Mr. Gladstone was good enough, in spite of this frank and full expression of my opinion, to invite me to join him in an inquiry into the subject, and I readily accepted his offer. I have doubted since whether I was right in so doing, and I will tell you that if I had known what was to be the nature of that inquiry and how limited it would be, I doubt if I should have thought it my duty to join the Government.

“On February 4th, having accepted office, I issued my address to you. . . . I said: ‘. . . I am prepared to support any just and reasonable proposal for a final settlement in accordance with the special necessities of the Land and Education questions. In connection with these subjects, I am convinced that it will be necessary to concede to the Irish people a much more extended control of their own domestic business. But I appeal to my recent speeches, both before and after the election, as evidence of my firm intention to consent to no plan which will not sufficiently guarantee the continued supremacy of the Crown in that country and the integrity of the Empire. . . .’

“I do not know who was consulted in the preparation of the Home Rule Bill and Land Purchase Bill, I do not know who joined in the inquiry to which I was invited. I only know that the Cabinet had no opportunity of considering the question until March 13th [1886], when the outlines of the Land Purchase Bill and of the Home Rule Bill were explained to them, and again on March 27th, when they were further expounded.”

At the Cabinet meeting of the 13th to which Mr. Chamberlain refers, the Home Rule Bill was not laid before the Ministry, but its outline (“which proposed the establishment of a Parliament in Dublin with very large powers”) was

sketched by Mr. Gladstone. The Land Bill on which Mr. Chamberlain had then to give his opinion involved and implied a Home Rule Bill on lines to which he could not consent. The remainder of this narrative is taken from his speech in the House of Commons, April 8th :—

“On the 15th I wrote to my right hon. friend (Mr. Gladstone). . . . In reply to that letter, [he] told me **And for Resigning.** that he thought my resignation was premature, and that it would be right that I should at all events postpone it until he had been able to complete his scheme for local government in Ireland and had submitted it to the Cabinet. In accordance with this request, therefore, I postponed my resignation until he should be in a position to make a statement, which was on March 26th, the next time the Cabinet met. . . .

“I took four principal objections to this proposal of” [Home Rule].

[Mr. Chamberlain objected (1) to remove Irish Members from Westminster; (2) to renounce the right of Imperial taxation in Ireland; (3) to surrender right of appointment of judges and magistrates; (4) to make the new authority “supreme in all matters not specially excluded from its competence.”]

“In these circumstances I again tendered my resignation, and it was accepted the next day” (March 27th, 1886).

“MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,—

“I have carefully considered the results of the discussion on Saturday, and I have come with the deepest reluctance to the conclusion that I shall not be justified in attending the meeting of the Cabinet on Tuesday, and that I must ask you to lay my resignation before her Majesty.  
**Mr. Chamberlain's Resignation. March 15th, 1886.**

“You will remember that in accepting office I expressed grave doubts as to the probability of my being able to support your Irish policy. Up to that time, however no definite proposals had been formulated by you, and it was only on Saturday last that you were in a position to make a communication to the Cabinet on that subject. Without entering on unnecessary details, I may say that you proposed a

scheme of Irish Land Purchase which involved an enormous and unprecedented use of British credit, in order, in your own words, 'to afford to the Irish landlord refuge and defence from a possible mode of government in Ireland which he regards as fatal to him.'

"This scheme, while contemplating only a trifling reduction of the judicial rents fixed before the recent fall in prices, would commit the British taxpayer to tremendous obligations, accompanied, in my opinion, with serious risk of ultimate loss. The greater part of the land of Ireland would be handed over to a new Irish elective authority, who would thus be at once the landlords and the delegates of the Irish tenants. I fear that these two capacities would be found inconsistent, and that the tenants, unable or unwilling to pay the rents demanded, would speedily elect an authority pledged to give them relief, and to seek to recoup itself by an early repudiation of what would be described as the English tribute.

"With these anticipations I was naturally anxious to know what was the object for which this risk was to be incurred, and for what form of Irish government it was to pave the way.

"I gathered from your statements that, though your plans are not finally matured, yet that you have come to the conclusion that any extension of Local Government on municipal lines, including even the creation of a National Council or Councils, for purely Irish business, would now be entirely inadequate, and that you are convinced of the necessity for conceding a separate Legislative Assembly for Ireland, with full powers to deal with all Irish affairs.

"I understood that you would exclude from their competence the control of the Army and Navy and the direction of Foreign and Colonial policy, but that you would allow them to arrange their own customs tariff, to have entire control of the civil forces of the country, and even, if they thought fit, to establish a Volunteer Army.

"It appears to me that a proposal of this kind must be regarded as tantamount to a proposal for Separation.

"I think it is even worse, because it would set up an unstable and temporary form of government, which would be a source of perpetual irritation and agitation until the full demands of the Nationalist party were conceded.

"The Irish Parliament would be called upon to pay three or four millions a year as its contribution to the National Debt and the Army and the Navy, and it would be required in addition to pay nearly five millions a year for interest and sinking fund on the cost of Irish land.

"These charges would be felt to be so heavy a burden on a poor country that persistent controversy would arise thereupon, and the due fulfilment of their obligations by the new Irish authority could only be enforced by a military intervention which would be undertaken with every disadvantage, and after all the resources of the country and the civil executive power had been surrendered to the Irish National Government.

"I conclude, therefore, that the policy which you propose to recommend to Parliament and the country practically amounts to a proposal that Great Britain should burden itself with an enormous addition to the National Debt, and probably also to an immediate increase of taxation, not in order to secure the closer and more effective union of the Three Kingdoms, but, on the contrary, to purchase the repeal of the Union and the practical separation of Ireland from England and Scotland.

"My public utterances and my conscientious convictions are absolutely opposed to such a policy, and I feel that the differences which have now been disclosed are so vital that I can no longer entertain the hope of being of service in the Government.

"I must, therefore, respectfully request you to take the necessary steps for relieving me of the office I have the honour to hold.

"I am, yours very truly,

"J. CHAMBERLAIN."

After a letter which indicated such uncompromising opposition to the principles as well as to the details of the Bill, it would seem impossible for the Prime Minister to ask Mr. Chamberlain to reconsider his decision. But the resignation of Sir G. Trevelyan had been received at the same time, and it was evident that Mr. Chamberlain would not be the only seceder from the Cabinet, a fact which indicated that he would be very far from being the only dissentient

Liberal outside it. Mr. Gladstone did not forget that Lord Hartington, Mr. Goschen, and sixteen other Liberals had, the preceding January, voted with Lord Salisbury's Government, as a demonstration of their unwillingness to do anything to bring into power an Administration pledged to grant Gladstonian Home Rule, or that Mr. Bright, the faithful friend of Ireland through many stormy years, was not a supporter of his present Irish policy.

It was, therefore, necessary for Mr. Gladstone to conciliate and retain, if possible, those members of his party whom he had so far carried with him. The seriousness of the defection of Mr. Chamberlain and Sir G. Trevelyan probably led the Prime Minister to make those modifications in the Home Rule Bill to which Mr. Chamberlain referred as having taken place after he left the Cabinet. "I rejoice," he said, "to see an approximation between the views of my right hon. friend and my own, which I did not dare to hope for at the time I left the Cabinet." But in spite of all modifications, an insuperable objection still remained to a Dublin Parliament, co-ordinate and co-equal with Imperial Parliament, which, if its Members used all the powers conceded to them, must, in his opinion, inevitably soon lead to actual, if not to formal, separation. To the Land Purchase Bill he was absolutely opposed.

The crisis in Mr. Chamberlain's political life had come, and in a form that no one six months earlier could have expected. Not long before, it had been said that his continued advocacy of an advanced and conciliatory policy for Ireland had made it difficult for Mr. Gladstone to preserve peace in the Cabinet. Now Mr. Chamberlain was left far behind by colleagues who had been unwilling to support his Irish policy, yet were about to concede almost more than even Parnell had asked.

The country was very uneasy. The *Times*, *Standard*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Daily Chronicle*, wept in chorus over the mad scheme that was too extreme for the Radical Chamberlain. "Preposterous!" said the *Times*, with a gasp of dismay.

"We have to deal with a situation in which schemes so extravagant that they are rejected by Mr. Chamberlain as well as by Lord Hartington are avowed." The *Times* had only just finished warning the party against Mr. Chamberlain's wild and irresponsible views as expressed in the unauthorised programme. The *Daily Chronicle* protested that "the Liberal Cabinet cannot be so demented as to consign Ireland to anarchy and ruin." The *Standard* pointed out that "those who best know the people are the first to repudiate Mr. Gladstone's plans."

The Bill was introduced by Mr. Gladstone on April 8th, 1886. By six o'clock in the morning Members appeared at the House to secure seats; the Irish even overflowed into the Conservative benches.

**The Home  
Rule Bill  
Introduced.  
April 8th,  
1886.**

One hundred and fifty enthusiastic legislators breakfasted at the House; three hundred took lunch there: in short, their time of slumber was as bright and busy as the usual Parliamentary day, which does not begin till three o'clock, and Members wandered forlornly here and there, from morn to mid-day, wondering what to do with themselves during such unwonted hours of Parliamentary attendance.

In view of the struggle for seats the Speaker had announced that Members were strictly limited to one hat each, and that after depositing that pledge upon a seat they must either remain within the precincts (as they are supposed to do after securing their places) or must go out into London streets bareheaded. A few chose the latter alternative; others would not risk it, and wandered in the Palace Yard feeding the pigeons, chaffing the cabmen, or strolling on the terrace. The Irish, more adventurous than the rest, finding a tricycle on the premises, rode it up and down the terrace, but one of them presently coming to grief, was sent over to Westminster Hospital to be bandaged up, and that evening represented his constituency with a noble disregard of his wound and of the conventionalities, wearing a "species of smoking-cap" over his bandages, as he paid a subdued attention to the scheme which was to occasion harder hitting



than any other which has ever been submitted to the Imperial Parliament.

When the reporters entered after prayers, they found that twenty-eight additional seats had been placed in the broad gangway between the sides of the House, and that Members were everywhere, even on the steps of the Speaker's chair. A curious group were in the place reserved for strangers on the floor, including Cardinal Manning, Mr. Samuel Morley, and Mr. Buckle, the editor of the *Times*, the recorder of political movements, whilst beside him was Mr. Schnadhorst, the organiser of them.

There was a most unusual gathering of Royalties: Prince Christian and the Duke of Cambridge were followed by the Prince of Wales and Prince Albert Victor; the Princess Beatrice and the Princess of Wales were also present. The Commons much enjoyed the spectacle of a body of peers breathlessly struggling to secure the very few seats available for them.

Crowds of the people accompanied Mr. Gladstone to the House from Downing Street, cheering all the way. As he entered, the Liberal Members rose as one man, and the Parnellites waved their hats above their heads and cheered to the echo the Minister of whom only three months before Mr. Parnell had said that—

“he coerced Ireland, deluged Egypt with blood, menaced religious liberty in the school and freedom of speech in Parliament, and promised generally a repetition of the crimes and follies of the last Liberal Administration.”

But this Minister was now about to entrust immense powers to men whom *he* had described as “*marching through rapine to the dismemberment of the Empire.*”

No wonder there was excitement—no wonder there was bewilderment!

Mr. Gladstone spoke for three hours and twenty minutes. His speech was listened to with strained and painful attention. But in spite of the unfavourable and hesitating comments of the Press and the ominous triumph of the

Nationalist leaders, the power of Mr. Gladstone's speech and influence was so great that in a few weeks the bewildered Liberal party was asking itself if it ought not to find salvation in Home Rule as set forth by its leader, and that at once. To make way against this marvellous influence his opponent must possess sober judgment and steadfast principles to support him. Mr. Chamberlain had need of all his strength to face the coming contest.

A Minister who resigns usually asks leave of her Majesty (through the Prime Minister) to be absolved from his Privy Councillor's oath of secrecy concerning Cabinet meetings. Mr. Chamberlain's explanation on the following evening was awaited with intense interest; the House was scarcely less crowded to hear him than it had been to hear Mr. Gladstone. He received a hearty cheer as he advanced to the table, wearing, not an orchid, but a bunch of violets.

Although the necessary permission for the explanation had been given, Mr. Gladstone objected to any reference to a measure (Land Purchase) not yet introduced to the House, so that Mr. Chamberlain's letter of resignation could not be read. A part of his statement had, therefore, to be deferred till the introduction of that Bill. Painful as the check was, coming in the midst of a speech which was difficult enough in any circumstances, Mr. Chamberlain quickly recovered himself and carried the House completely with him. The *Daily Chronicle* called the speech "a piece of keen, merciless criticism. With few exceptions he touched on all the important points, and his course was strewn by broken fragments of the Prime Minister's scheme."

The House was eager to hear in what terms Mr. Chamberlain would allude to his late chief.

"I will say to the House that no act of my public life Mr. Chamberlain's has been so painful as the resignation which I recently tendered to my right hon. friend. I am told that by taking that step I have wrecked my political prospects, and destroyed altogether all hope of future usefulness. That is a prospect which

Explanation  
in the House,  
April, 1886.

it is possible for me to contemplate with equanimity ; but it is more difficult to reconcile myself to a separation from one whom I have followed and honoured for so many years, and to leave the personal friends and political associates with whom, I believe, I have no other cause of difference whatever. I have found it hard to give up an opportunity which I thought I had in my grasp to do something to put forward legislation in which I take a great and overwhelming interest. These considerations weighed with me, and I can assure the House that I found it a more difficult task to leave a Government than to enter one. . . .

"I admit that if any difference of opinion has arisen between myself and my right hon. friend, with his unrivalled experience, with his vast knowledge of public affairs, and with his long and tried devotion to the public service, the natural presumption is, that he is right and that I am wrong.

"It is a presumption to which I have yielded my own judgment on many occasions, but in the present instance the issue before us is one of such vital importance, and a mistake, if we make one, is so fatal and irrevocable, that it seems to me to be the duty of every man, however humble, to bring an independent judgment to its consideration ; and everything—private feeling, personal friendship, political ambition, and the cherished objects of a public life—all these must be put aside in view of circumstances which are still higher and still more important.

"Since I have been in public affairs I have called myself, I think not altogether without reason, a Radical. But that title has never prevented me from giving great consideration to Imperial interests. I have cared for the honour, and the influence, and the integrity of the Empire, and it is because I believe these things are now in danger that I have felt myself called upon to make the greatest sacrifice that any public man can make."

Mr. Chamberlain then recapitulated the course of events on his joining the Ministry, reading the letter he wrote on that occasion, and repeating Mr. Gladstone's assurances that he was free to reject the Home Rule scheme if necessary.

"I have never been opposed to Home Rule, as I have

explained, and as I have always understood the words, and as my right hon. friend has on many public occasions defined it. The definitions of my right hon. friend—those which I have accepted—are these :—

“That he has ever been willing—as I have been willing—to give to Ireland the largest possible extension of Local Government consistent with the integrity of the Empire and the supremacy of Parliament ; and, further, my right hon. friend has always declared, that he would never offer to Ireland anything in the direction of Home Rule which he was not prepared to offer with an equal hand to Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom.

“If now, Sir, to my deep regret, and with the greatest possible reluctance, I have felt compelled to sever myself from the Government of my right hon. friend, it is because in my heart and conscience I do not think the scheme which he explained to the House last night does maintain the limitations which he has always declared himself determined to preserve. . . .”

In conclusion he said :—

“I do not assume, Heaven knows I do not pretend, to dogmatise on a question of this kind. I do not say that I am right in the conclusion at which I have arrived ; I do not presume to condemn those who honestly differ from me ; but of one thing I am certain—that I should have been guilty of an incredible shame and baseness if I had clung to place and office in support of a policy which in my heart I believe to be injurious to the best interests of Ireland and Great Britain.”

Mr. Gladstone introduced his Land Bill seven days later (April 16th,) and Mr. Chamberlain immediately followed him, completing his personal explanation and strenuously opposing the Bill. He concluded by saying :—

“Remember what a precedent you are making.” [From  
 Speech one hundred to one hundred and fifty millions of  
 against the English money was to be borrowed to pay off  
 Land Bill. Irish landlords.]

“I was not very long at the Local Government Board,

but I was there long enough to feel great alarm at the prospect of the future. If the depression of trade continues, . . . you will have demands . . . for State assistance growing in force every day, which, if a precedent of this kind be created, will become absolutely irresistible. If I had no other reason for objecting to the scheme, one—and I think a sufficient one—would be that before very long we may want all this money for ourselves. You are refusing to the people of Scotland what I believe the majority of them want: that State aid should be given to the crofters . . . who have been reduced to misery by bad laws which throw upon us as great a responsibility as any laws in Ireland. You are refusing, or at least postponing, aid to the agricultural labourers of England, who ask you to give them opportunities to improve their position by securing for them some direct interest in the soil they cultivate. You cannot refuse it to the crofters of Scotland and to the agricultural labourers of England and grant it to the people of Ireland. These are considerations which the House will do well to weigh before the second reading of the Bill.

“For my own part, I recognise the spirit of conciliation with which the Government has tried to meet some of the objections already taken.

“I need not assure my right hon. friend, or my friends around me, that the differences which, unfortunately, for a time—I hope it may be only a short time—have separated me from my right hon. friend have not impaired my respect and regard for his character and abilities.

“I am not an irreconcilable opponent. (Loud cheers from the Gladstonians.) My right hon. friend has made very considerable modifications in his Bill. All I can say is, that if the movement continues—as I hope it may—I shall be delighted to be relieved from an attitude which I have only assumed with the greatest reluctance, and which I can only maintain with the deepest pain and regret.”

This was the temper in which Mr. Chamberlain approached the greatest controversy of English political life in the nineteenth century. Home Rule, as set forth by Mr. Gladstone, had broken up the Cabinet; it was now to divide the country and the constituencies.

In what spirit would Mr. Chamberlain's resignation be

regarded—as an unjustifiable desertion or as a conscientious protest? He could not, if he wished, act for himself alone. He was the spokesman of the Federation of Liberal Associations throughout the country ; he was their President. What action would they take? The country was waiting to see, and in the Easter Recess Mr. Chamberlain went down to address the annual meeting of the Birmingham Liberal Association—the meeting of the Two Thousand.

## CHAPTER XXII

### *HOME RULE IN THE COUNTRY*

APRIL, 1886—AUGUST, 1886

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S MEETING WITH HIS CONSTITUENTS, APRIL 21ST  
—MAY MEETINGS—THE SECEDERS DETERMINE TO VOTE AGAINST  
THE SECOND READING—THE RADICAL UNIONISTS.

THE meeting of the Two Thousand of the Birmingham Liberal Association was eagerly looked for, not only by Mr. Chamberlain's constituents, who were impatient to hear his explanation, but by the country, which was curious to know what the verdict of Birmingham would be.

As has already been said, the true significance of the Home Rule contest was not yet fully understood; and at this moment the question was not simply whether Mr. Chamberlain was justified in the course he had taken of active opposition to the Bill, but whether a prolonged opposition was to be offered by the Liberal party. Should the opponents of the Bill vote for the second reading by way of showing their agreement with Home Rule in the abstract, leaving details to be settled in Committee; or were the principles embodied in the Bill such that it must be opposed unconditionally throughout? The Liberal party were of course aware that Lord Hartington and Mr. Bright would have nothing to say to the Bill, and that Sir G. Trevelyan had resigned his seat in the Cabinet as well as Mr. Chamberlain.

But Birmingham had not realised that the party was already irrevocably divided. Dr. Dale, a representative

Liberal and Mr. Chamberlain's staunch friend and supporter, spoke of Mr. Gladstone as "the leader of the party," saying :—

"The Liberal party had a right to demand Mr. Chamberlain's judgment at such a time as this—his frank and honest judgment. He has given it. He would have been a traitor to us, a traitor to his chief, a traitor to his country, if he had not given it frankly. But the question of leadership is not raised. Mr. Gladstone is the leader of the party."

For this speech Mr. Gladstone wrote a letter of thanks to Dr. Dale, who in his reply said : "I need not say how great a grief it is to me that Mr. Chamberlain should have been bound in honour, as I think he was, to leave your Ministry at such a time." But Dr. Dale took this opportunity of pointing out how disastrous the dismissal of the Irish Members from Westminster would be, involving, as it did, taxation without representation for the Irish people. This point he insisted on at the meeting.

It was on April 21st that Mr. Chamberlain made his speech to his constituents.

"We are called upon," he said, "to face a question upon which a wrong decision may imperil the existence of the State itself. . . . After that, it may seem a small thing to say that upon our right conduct of this controversy depends the existence of the Liberal party as a great and potent force in the political life of the future."

"That is not a small matter to me. Fifteen years ago I was drawn into politics by my interest in social questions and my desire to promote the welfare of the great majority of the population. At that time I saw the great majority—the masses of the industrious, thrifty, hard-working artisans and labourers, condemned by bad laws, and by the neglect of their rulers, to a life of exacting toil, without the advantages and opportunities which education affords, and borne down by conditions which I thought to be unfair and unjust—and I looked to the Liberal party to be the means of removing

Mr. Chamberlain's Explanation to his Constituents, April 21st, 1886.



and remedying these grievances, as the great instrument of progress and reform, and from that time to this I have done everything that an individual can do. I have made sacrifices of money and time and labour, I have made sacrifices of my opinions, to maintain the organisation and to preserve the unity of the Liberal party.

"And even now—in this time of discouragement and anxiety, when personal friendships and political ties are breaking down under the strain of the dissensions which have been raised amongst us—I entreat of you so to continue this discussion that when this time of trial is past, we may once more unite—(loud cheers)—without embittered memories, without unkind reflections, to carry forward the great work upon which hitherto we have been absolutely unanimous."

Mr. Chamberlain then proceeded to discuss the Bill, saying that it was "the very irony of fate" that they should be called upon to discuss a question which a few months before, at the General Election, "never entered into our thoughts," which then were turned "towards the solution of those great social reforms which had excited our interest and our sympathy."

"What has produced this great change in the situation? . . . The whole change is due to the force of character, to the determination, and to the courage of one illustrious man, and although I regret the object for which these qualities have been displayed, I will say to you that never before has my admiration for them been so sincere, so profound. . . .

"There is only one person in the Three Kingdoms who can regard the situation with unmixed satisfaction. . . . Mr. Parnell, the Uncrowned King. Gentlemen, you all know that I have never, either in public or in private, spoken with other than respect of Mr. Parnell. I believe him to be sincere and patriotic. I think very often he has been mistaken in his course, but at least I give him credit for perfect honesty of purpose, and I recognise in him a man who knows his own mind."

Only if the Bill fulfilled the conditions Mr. Parnell had laid down, could they hope that it would be a permanent

settlement of the Irish question. These conditions, according to his speeches (beginning with the famous declaration of 1880—"None of us will be satisfied till we have destroyed the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England"), were all summed up in one word—Separation.

The present settlement was not only not final, but was a reactionary measure. It proposed Imperial taxation for Ireland without Imperial representation. How would it affect England?

"England may be struggling for its very existence; she may be in the throes of death; but Ireland would be unconcerned. Under the new Constitution she will be unaffected. No call can be made upon her for assistance or for aid. She will have no voice in the policy which has brought us into conflict; she will have no part in the contest itself; she will have no share in the burdens which it may involve," [other than a fixed contribution settled upon a peace estimate of the cost of the Army and Navy].

Again, the Bill would necessitate coercion of the worst kind. There were two nations in Ireland, and one—the loyal minority, industrious and prosperous—was bitterly opposed to the scheme.

"They believe that their property, their religion—ay, even their lives—could not safely be trusted to a Nationalist Parliament in Dublin. Well, for my part, I hate coercion, and I am not disposed to coerce these men by British soldiers."

The Land Purchase Bill would make English working men Irish landlords, who would have to evict tenants and "collect rent at the point of the bayonet" if Ireland refused to pay.

"I think the Bill is a bad one. I would sooner go out of politics altogether than give my vote to pledge the capital of the country, and the future earnings of every man and woman in the United Kingdom, in order to modify the

opposition of a small class of Irish proprietors to a scheme which, if it remains in its present form, will, I believe, infallibly lead to the separation of Ireland from England."

As regarded his resignation, he appealed to the example of Mr. Gladstone, who had more than once separated himself from a Government whose policy he could not approve.

"You would justly despise and condemn me now if, for the sake of private interests and personal ambition, I were false to my convictions and disregarded what I believe to be the vital interests of my country."

The speech was concluded amid enthusiastic applause.

**Resolutions  
at the  
Meeting.** Immediately after Mr. Chamberlain had spoken, the chairman, Mr. Schnadhorst, the newly elected President of the Liberal Association, proposed a vote of confidence in Mr. Chamberlain :—

"This meeting thanks Mr. Chamberlain for his address and declares its unabated confidence in him, and, recognising his honesty in the course he has taken, places on record its judgment that in fulfilling his conditions he has been guided by a high sense of personal honour and public duty."

This vote was passed with great enthusiasm.

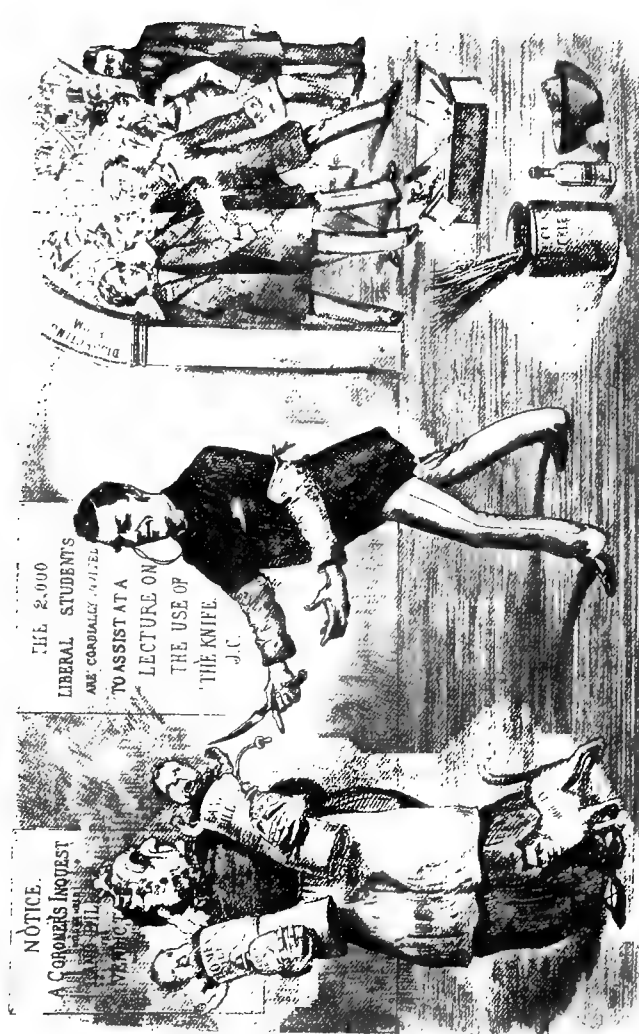
Dr. Dale had to move the second resolution, which declared the complete confidence of Birmingham Liberals in Mr. Gladstone as leader of the party, and their sympathy with his efforts to settle the Irish question by means of a representative Irish assembly with large powers; but the unequivocal demand for the maintenance of the Union and of Imperial supremacy, together with the retention of the Irish Members at Westminster, showed that this representative meeting of Liberals already differed very greatly from Mr. Gladstone. This resolution, which practically committed Birmingham to Mr. Chamberlain's Unionist policy, was carried by an overwhelming majority, in spite of a discussion as to whether the lateness of the hour did not make it inexpedient for the vote to be taken that night. Mr.

Chamberlain, however, pointed out that the country was waiting to hear Birmingham's opinion on the Bill, and that it should be given without further delay.

When he began his speech, there was a very natural feeling that Mr. Gladstone, with his immense experience and his enthusiasm for Liberal principles, could only have adopted his Bill after careful consideration, and that it was therefore becoming on the part of the rank and file of the party to accept it. But as Mr. Chamberlain proceeded with his closely reasoned discourse, and showed that the Prime Minister's enthusiasm for an idea, a free and happy Ireland, had obscured his judgment and led him into legislative difficulties at which even his supporters looked askance, the meeting began to see that the question was not nearly so simple as it had first appeared, and that they could not blindly follow Mr. Gladstone. At the conclusion of Mr. Chamberlain's explanation of his position, the almost universal feeling was, that though the issues were grave and far-reaching and merited the careful study of every man, yet Mr. Chamberlain's experience and his zeal for Irish reform were such that it behoved his constituents, having trusted him thus far, to trust him completely, even in this difficult matter. Since that time Birmingham and the Midlands as a whole have stoutly supported the Unionist policy.

The *Times* said the Birmingham Two Thousand had pledged themselves to Mr. Chamberlain's view pure and simple, and Birmingham, as represented by its political organisation, would have nothing to do with purchasing Irish land, nor accept Home Rule unless its central principle was given up and the whole fabric of restrictions, ingenious checks, and safeguards cut away.

The Conservative party had already taken action by forming the "Loyal and Patriotic Union" at the Opera House meeting, which, though called by Lord Salisbury, was attended by Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen, and Mr. Gladstone's manifesto of May 1st began a novel series of "May Meetings" organised by sections of both parties.



POOR TWINS.

NURSE GLADSTONE: "Oh dear, oh dear! What are you going to do with them?"  
MR. CHAMBERLAIN: "Only a little operation; you should have consulted me before."

From a cartoon which appeared in the *Birmingham Free Lancer*, May 1886.



The manifesto appealed to the Liberal party to vote for the principle of the Home Rule Bill and leave details to be settled later. The Land Bill need not be considered as final, or as essential to the Home Rule Bill, the second reading of which was moved on May 10th. But as the discussion dragged on (to June 7th), it was seen that the principal provisions to which Mr. Chamberlain had objected were to be retained. During this time Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Hartington took counsel together as to the best means of defeating the Bill.

The National Liberal Federation had already met in London and decided to throw over Mr. Chamberlain and support Mr. Gladstone, but men were slowly finding out that the sense of the country was far more in favour of the ex-Minister than had been supposed. Now that conciliation seemed impossible it was necessary to organise resistance to the Bill. Accordingly, Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Hartington, and Lord Salisbury called meetings in quick succession. Fifty-two Members of Parliament met at Mr. Chamberlain's to discuss the position,<sup>1</sup> and of these, thirty-two, including the Radical leader himself, went on to the Whig meeting at Devonshire House, where altogether sixty-four Liberals assembled. The result of these meetings was that Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain with their friends decided to oppose the second reading. This was the extent to which, at present, the Liberal seceders would go in coalescing with the Tories.

As the consequences of Mr. Chamberlain's secession from the Government became more apparent, and as his following grew, not only in numbers, but in importance, the Gladstonians became more determined and the tone of the controversy more

**Preparations  
to Defeat  
the Second  
Reading of  
the Home  
Rule Bill.**

**Meetings.**  
May 12th,  
14th, 15th.

**Second  
Reading  
Debate.**  
May 10th,  
June 7th.

<sup>1</sup> This was a very important meeting. The majority against the second reading was only thirty. Thus the thirty-two men who supported Mr. Chamberlain at the Duke of Devonshire's meeting largely determined the fate of the Bill. A letter read from Mr. Bright had a great effect on this decision.

bitter. In a letter written early in May Mr. Chamberlain had intimated that possibly the "present imminent danger of a fatal breach in the ranks of the Liberal party might be happily averted" if the full representation of Ireland at Westminster were conceded. And once again, after Mr. Gladstone's announcement at the Foreign Office meeting that concessions would be made on this point, his hopes were raised only to be dashed, when he found that what was called the "In-and-out" proposal was all that was offered. In substance it was a suggestion that Irish Members should be able to vote at Westminster on certain occasions when Imperial matters were under discussion, though they would not always sit there. From that time Mr. Chamberlain became convinced that the Bill must be opposed unreservedly.

In his speech on June 1st he told the House that personal attacks—

"may tend to relieve the monotony of the debate, but I think they are below the level of the great constitutional discussion in which we are called upon to take part. . . . It has been admitted by the Government that these proposals are the gravest and the most startling that have been presented to Parliament during the life of the present generation. . . . No man can rid himself of his responsibility in this matter to form and to act upon an independent judgment, altogether without reference to any personal consideration."

Speech on  
the Second  
Reading.  
June 1st,  
1886.

Two things had become clear during the controversy :—

"One is, that the British democracy has a passionate devotion to the Prime Minister—devotion earned and deserved by fifty years of public service, and that sentiment is as honourable to him as it is to those who feel and express it."

The other was the "universality and completeness of the sentiment" in favour of some form of Home Rule for Ireland. On these two points the democracy was unanimous, but it was not unanimous as to the methods—

"by which it has been sought to establish this principle. . . .



It is upon the method and plan of the Bill that we are going to the country, and not upon its principle. . . . Of one thing I am confident—and I know something about the matter—that the Unionist majority in this House will be strengthened.”

In conclusion, he referred to the bitterness with which he himself had been assailed, and asked the friends from whom he differed “whether it is really necessary to impute the basest motives to public men at a time when there are, on the surface, reasons perfectly honourable which may sufficiently account for their conduct.” His colleague John Bright had taken the same course.

“He is going into the lobby against this Bill and against the friends, the associate, and the leader whom he has followed with loyal devotion for many years of his life. . . . And no one has doubted his honour. But you say that I am in a different position. And why do you say that? . . . I spoke at Warrington in September, 1885, and, referring to the demands of the hon. Member for Cork (Mr. Parnell), I said then that if there were any party or any man who was willing to yield to those demands in order to purchase his support, I would have no part in the competition. And then many of my friends whom I see around me thanked me in public for what they thought a plain, frank, courageous declaration. And now, forsooth, for having made the same declaration some three months later, when the occasion has arisen, they accuse me of personal and unworthy motives.

“Sir, the charge is unjust, and the charge is ridiculous, for there is not a man here who does not know that every personal and political consideration would lead me to cast in my lot with the Prime Minister. Why, Sir, not a day passes in which I do not receive dozens or scores of letters urging me for my own sake to vote for the Bill and ‘dish the Whigs.’

“Well, Sir, the temptation is no doubt a great one, but after all, I am not base enough to serve my personal ambition by betraying my country; and I am convinced, when the heat of this discussion is past, Liberals will not judge harshly those who have pursued what they honestly believe

to be the path of duty, even though it may lead to the disruption of party ties and to the loss of the influence and power which it is the legitimate ambition of every man to seek among his political friends and associates."

In the division on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill (which was taken on June 7th) the whole strength of the Conservatives, as returned at the elections (249), was reinforced by 94 Liberals, bringing the numbers against the Bill to 343, while the Gladstonians and Irish together only mustered 313. Thus the Bill was lost by 30 votes, and the half-dozen followers with which the seceders had been credited had grown to 94.

Parliament was, however, not dissolved till June 25th.

In spite of the fact that he acted with men like John Bright, Lord Hartington, Lord Selborne, Sir George Trevelyan, Sir Henry James, and Mr. Goschen, besides a number of the rank and file, the Gladstonian organs and the Gladstonians themselves persisted in speaking of Mr. Chamberlain as the arch-traitor, the sole seceder, the beginning and end of the trouble. It is curious that it should have been so. It is no compliment to John Bright to pretend that his action was prompted by that of the junior Member for Birmingham, and it is ridiculous for one moment to entertain such a supposition. He had left Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet himself in 1882, and he invariably retained his independence, not only of judgment, but of action.

Few blamed Mr. Bright; many reproached Mr. Chamberlain. To his friends in Birmingham the attacks made on him were as inexplicable as they were unjustifiable. In June Dr. Dale wrote:—

"How is it that Mr. Chamberlain is the object of so much bitterness? Lord Hartington and Mr. Bright are just as responsible as he is for throwing out the Bill. On what ground can the assaults on Mr. Chamberlain be justified? He is loyally carrying out the principles on this question which he advocated at Warrington last year, and for his

avowal of which he received the enthusiastic approbation of the whole Liberal party. He may be mistaken, as other men have been; but he stands by the faith which he professes and has made the heaviest personal sacrifices in doing so. Had he remained in the Ministry after Lord Hartington refused to join it, he would have been heir-apparent to the Leadership of the Commons. . . .

"Mr. Chamberlain's own settled convictions have been long familiar to me; we discussed them together when they were regarded as perilously rash by members of the present Cabinet.

"The concession he has made" [in endeavouring to accept a legislative body in Dublin] "was a very heavy one. It was not met frankly by the Cabinet. By piecemeal and with obvious reluctance one proposal after another was made that had the appearance of conceding what he asked for, but the substantial thing was never promised. . . .

"His opinion about the results of his action has been that it will leave him under the shadow of general unpopularity for several years. It is rather dangerous political morality to suggest that a man is playing for his own hand when, in harmony with his avowed convictions, he feels obliged to separate himself from his party at such a cost as this."

Some one had urged that Mr. Chamberlain would lose Nonconformist support by his abandonment of Mr. Gladstone.

"Be very sure of this," said Dr. Dale: "in Mr. Chamberlain's judgment, the question is too grave to be affected by facts of that kind, much as he may regret them. . . . And yet, as this is not strictly a Nonconformist question, I wonder at what you say.

"On a subject upon which Mr. Bright and Sir G. Trevelyan, to say nothing of Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen and Sir Henry James, differ from Mr. Gladstone, it is hard to understand why Mr. Chamberlain, because he differs, should have been supposed to commit the unpardonable sin."

Any doubt whether Home Rule was to be made a party question at the elections was dissipated by Mr. Gladstone himself. "If I had twenty votes," he said, "I would give all the twenty against the man who votes against Ireland and our policy."

"Apart even from the Irish question," wrote Dr. Dale—and he was a friend of Mr. Gladstone's—"the issue has been put by Mr. Gladstone in a way that would have made his success, in my judgment, a political disaster. We are asked to believe that the Bills of last Session are dead; what the Bills of next Session are to be we are not told. The Liberal party has been asked to give Mr. Gladstone a majority in favour of his Irish policy, though his Irish policy is undisclosed. I hope the country will never give a blank cheque to any statesman. . . .

"What is to be said of his allowing Hartington's seat to be contested? He could have stopped it if he had tried. He has proclaimed war to the knife with every Liberal that does not agree with him."

Birmingham returned five candidates as Liberal Unionists without opposition. But two of the Members, Mr. Henry Broadhurst and Alderman Cook, decided to stand as Gladstonians; the latter was replaced by Mr. Henry Matthews, and Broadhurst by Mr. Jesse Collings. Thus Birmingham returned seven Members pledged to a Unionist policy.

On the night before the election in the Bordesley division a magnificent meeting was held in the Town Hall, and Mr. Chamberlain delivered his vindication of his friend, of whom Mr. Gladstone had recently allowed himself to speak in a most contemptuous manner, as "a certain Mr. Jesse Collings . . . who was now engaged in an endeavour to obstruct beneficent legislation."

"I do not care to dwell upon this," said Mr. Chamberlain—"I hope it may be forgotten when the smoke of the battle clears away—and I turn with greater pleasure to the main issue which brought us together."

Stripped of all disguises, that issue was "Union or Separation?" The close of his speech roused his audience to extraordinary enthusiasm:

"It is one thing to grant the wishes and to meet the

requirements of the Irish people ; it is another thing to drop on your knees to conspirators in America. You have a momentous decision to make. This is an unexampled crisis in our national history. . . . The British democracy is on its trial. On your shoulders have descended all the traditions of the past. To you is entrusted all the defence of your country. Your action is being watched with the keenest interest by every dependency, in every quarter of the vast dominion that your ancestors have established. In all our colonies,—above all in India, where hundreds of millions of men acknowledge the sway of England, not merely for the display of force which we are able to make, but because they believe us to be brave and bold and enduring,—in every country over which the rule of the Queen extends, these proposals have excited an alarm amongst the friends, and a sinister interest amongst the foes of England.

"These two islands have always played a great part in the history of the world. Again and again, outnumbered, overmatched, confronted with difficulties and danger, they have held their own against a world in arms. (*'And they will again,' and loud cheering.*) They have stubbornly and proudly resisted all their enemies and have scattered them like chaff before the wind.

"And if in the future, if now you are going to yield to the threat of obstruction and agitation—(*'Never !'*)—if you tremble at the thought of responsibility, if you shrink from the duty which is cast upon you, if you are willing to wash your hands of your obligations, if you will desert those who trust to your loyalty and honour, if British courage and pluck are dead within your hearts, if you are going to quail before the dagger of the assassin and the threats—(*'Never !'—and protracted cheering, the audience rising in a body*)—and the threats of conspirators and rebels, then I say indeed the sceptre of dominion will have passed from our grasp, and this great Empire will perish with the loss of the qualities which have hitherto sustained it."

In this great outburst of feeling Mr. Chamberlain replied to all the ignoble taunts of which he had been the target since March 15th, when he resigned his seat in the Cabinet. All the pent-up feeling of these bitter months found its expression in this declaration that the real question was not

Chamberlain or Gladstone, Liberal or Unionist, not even English or Irish. It was the stability of a great Empire, the heritage of a mighty nation, the trust of a thousand years, which they were guarding from an attack made, not of malice aforethought, but which, from the very honesty of the man who led it and of the motives which prompted it, was the more dangerous and the more difficult to repel. Ireland was much, but the Empire was more. All the world would wait to see if England kept intact that which our forefathers had handed down or if she sold her birthright, not for a mess of pottage, but from sheer weakness.

Book IV  
LIFE AS A LIBERAL UNIONIST  
*SECTION I*  
OUT OF OFFICE





## CHAPTER XXIII

### *THE RADICAL UNIONIST*

AUGUST, 1886—NOVEMBER, 1887

AFTER THE DEFEAT OF THE HOME RULE BILL—ELECTIONS, JULY, 1886—CONSERVATIVES IN POWER—CAMPAIGN AGAINST HOME RULE—IRELAND UNDER LORD SALISBURY—PLAN OF CAMPAIGN—MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S POLITICAL TOUR IN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND.

THE returns of the General Election of July, 1886, gave the strength of the various parties as : Conservatives, 316 ; Nationalists, 85 ; Home Rulers or Gladstonians, 191 ; Anti-Home Rulers, or Radical Unionists, as they were called at this time, 78.

The New Party. The Radical Union, which had been founded in May by Mr. Chamberlain, assisted in organising the Unionist party, for the Gladstonians had secured the National Liberal Federation, of which Mr. Schnadhorst was the head. It was not often that the latter's political forecasts were wrong, but he certainly underestimated the resistance which would be made to Mr. Gladstone's Bill, and it is possible that quite unintentionally he misled the leader of the Liberal party. Not the least painful incident of a trying time was the severance of the ties between Mr. Schnadhorst and the Birmingham Liberal leaders, many of whom regarded him, not only as a trusted adviser, but as a personal friend. It was a difficult situation, and the man whom Mr. Chamberlain had practically made was henceforth to use his immense influence against his old chief.

In every workshop and factory, in every ward and district

in Birmingham, the effect of the great upheaval made itself felt. How was it possible to be loyal to Liberal principles when the Liberal party was divided, each section at variance with the other and pulling in different directions? In November came trouble in connection with the municipal elections. True, they had always been fought on the broad general ground of Liberalism and Conservatism—the one standing for reform, the other for a let-alone policy as applied to municipal affairs. But now what was to be done? Must Home Rule be mixed up with these general matters? Did a Town Councillor's opinions on Ireland qualify him or debar him from a seat in the Council, and affect his capability for dealing with gas, water, and sewage?

Apparently it did. The word went forth that the old distinctions of Liberal and Conservative were to be laid aside, and the ward elections were to be fought on the new Home Rule lines, the candidates ranging themselves under the Gladstonian or the Liberal-Unionist banner. This decision caused considerable dissatisfaction. But before passing judgment on the policy which required municipal contests to be fought on these grounds, it is necessary, if unfairness is to be avoided, to inquire what were Mr. Chamberlain's views on this question in the abstract. In his *Fortnightly* article on "The Caucus," written so far back as 1878, he expressed an opinion, which he afterwards reiterated in his Glasgow speeches of 1897, namely, that the safest and purest ground on which to fight all local elections is the political one. The broad lines of political faith by which a man stands or falls are plain to all; once put them aside, only the personal factor remains. To fight any election on the ground of the personal suitability of the candidate opens the door to corruption. In this connection he said:—

"The exclusion from local affairs of the higher issues leaves the door open to lower influences. If the battle be not fought on political grounds, there will none the less be party divisions, though these will turn on personal claims or petty local objects . . . and in this way the administration

of the affairs of a great community sinks to the level of an unintelligent and selfish parochialism."

The National Radical Union had been formed, not only to oppose Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy, but to pro-  
The Cam-  
paign against  
Home Rule  
after the  
Elections pound one which should secure the adhesion of  
 Unionist Liberals. It was not formed until Mr.  
 Gladstone's defeat on the second reading, when it  
 became evident that an election was close at hand. The  
 Radical Unionists were "willing to accept Mr. Gladstone's  
 statement of the Irish problem as it was presented by him  
 before the last General Election," and they hoped to return  
 a Liberal majority "strong enough to carry a good measure  
 and a safe measure which will reunite the Liberal party."

The main outlines of their policy, as set forth in their  
 manifesto, were to maintain an actual, not a nominal  
 supremacy, of the Imperial Parliament over Ireland; to  
 make the new authority subordinate to that Parliament and  
 to retain a sufficient hold over the executive to secure the  
 observance of the conditions which were laid down; to define  
 strictly all powers delegated to the new authority, and devise  
 some check to prevent abuse of them; lastly, all provisions  
 for Irish Home Rule must be so devised as to be applicable  
 to Scotland, Wales, and England in the near future.

There would be no finality in any proposal but in one  
 for Separation, said Mr. Chamberlain, if they intended to  
 satisfy the Irish-Americans or Mr. Parnell. But the Irish  
 people themselves were more reasonable and more loyal.

"I doubt very much," said Mr. Chamberlain, when speaking  
 at the inaugural meeting of the National Radical Union,  
 June 17th, "whether at the present moment they even know  
 properly what local government is, so unsatisfactory and  
 so incomplete have hitherto been all provisions for that  
 purpose in Ireland. . . . If the opportunity were offered them  
 of a fair field for local patriotism and local ambition, if they  
 were given the management of their own domestic business  
 under proper conditions, and if Irish opinions and sentiment  
 had full play in legislation wherever they did not conflict

with the reasonable rights of individuals and classes nor with the interests of the Empire, I doubt very much whether they would allow their representatives to refuse the chance which was afforded to them."

According to Mr. Chamberlain's election address (June 11th, **Radical Unionist Programme.** 1886) three points should be kept in view in the next Parliament:—

"1. To relieve Imperial Parliament by devolution of Irish business (local), and to set it free for other and more important work.

"2. To secure the full representation of Irish opinion on all matters of purely Irish concern.

"3. To offer to Irishmen a fair field for legitimate local ambition and patriotism, and to bring back the attention of the Irish people—now diverted to a barren conflict in the Imperial Parliament—to the practical consideration of their own wants and necessities. And, lastly, by removing all unnecessary interference with Irish Government on the part of Great Britain, to diminish the causes of irritation and the opportunity of collision."

And what were the means to be employed for these ends?

"I would bring in a Bill," said Mr. Chamberlain in his Home Rule speech of April 9th, "to stay all evictions for six months, leaving any arrears to be settled in connection with the final settlement. I would throw upon the Government the duty of lending to those landlords who might have any need of it such a proportion of their rent as would save them from privation and necessity." [A sum of four millions, he reckoned, would be more than sufficient for that purpose.] "I would carry on the inquiry which has been begun by the Prime Minister and the Government, but I would no longer have it carried on by a single individual, however colossal his intelligence may be. I would not have it carried on by a single party, but with the co-operation and assent of all parties in the House: by a Committee or Commission which would represent all the sections of this House . . . I should look for the solution

in the direction of the principle of federation. In my view the solution of this question should be sought in some form of federation which would really maintain the Imperial unity, and which would at the same time conciliate the desire for a national local government."

This, then, was Mr. Chamberlain's position when he took his seat as a Radical Unionist in the new Parliament which met on August 5th, 1886.

But obviously he had at present no opportunity of carrying out this policy with Lord Salisbury in office and Lord Randolph Churchill as Leader of the House of Commons. At a meeting held at Devonshire House immediately Parliament assembled it was

determined that the Whigs under Lord Hartington and the Radicals under Mr. Chamberlain—the Dissident Liberals, as they were called by their opponents, the Liberal Unionists, as they called themselves—should unite with the Tories in so far as was necessary to keep the latter in office. Unless the Unionists could prevent Mr. Gladstone's return to power their work would be undone, and all chance of bringing forward an alternative Irish policy would be lost. At this moment, indeed, the Liberal Unionists could turn out the Conservative Government should they join the Gladstonians and Irish. But the Gladstonians and the Irish alone could not defeat the Conservatives, much less the allied Conservatives and Liberal Unionists.

Lord Salisbury, indeed, was fully aware of their power and offered to give place to Lord Hartington; but the latter would have had only seventy-seven actual, as against three hundred and sixteen nominal, followers, had he become Prime Minister, and a Cabinet which should include Lord Salisbury, Mr. Chamberlain, and Lord Hartington appeared, and indeed was, an altogether impracticable coalition until some of the divergencies between the three leaders should have disappeared.

At the end of the year, Mr. Goschen, until then a Liberal Unionist, joined the Conservative Cabinet, when Lord

Parties  
in the  
Parliament  
of August,  
1886.

Randolph Churchill resigned his seat—a resignation that occasioned Mr. Chamberlain some uneasiness as to Lord Salisbury's policy.

"I fear it is probable," he said at Birmingham, December 23rd, 1886, "that the old Tory influences have gained the upper hand, and that we may be face to face with a Tory Government whose proposals no consistent Liberal will be able to support. . . . We Liberals are agreed upon ninety-nine points of our programme ; we only disagree upon one. . . . *I am convinced now that, sitting round a table and coming together in a spirit of compromise and conciliation*—almost any three men, leaders of the Liberal party . . . would be able to arrange some scheme" (of Home Rule).

The suggestion was favourably received, and in January, 1887, what was known as the Round Table Conference was held ; the opposing parties being represented by Mr. Chamberlain and Sir G. Trevelyan on the one hand, and Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Morley on the other, with Lord Herschell as a neutral consultant. Both parties were in earnest, both were absolutely honest, but the *minimum* demand of each was irreducible, and, being based on principle, it was also inconvertible—there was no common factor between an unconditional demand for a legislative body in Dublin and unconditional opposition to such a body. The Conference dragged on throughout January, and adjourned till February, when a letter written by Mr. Chamberlain in the *Baptist* practically ended it by giving Sir W. Harcourt occasion to aver that the subject under discussion was thereby prejudiced, and the letter was severely criticised as being injudicious. In it the Irish party had been described as "eighty delegates representing the policy and receiving the pay of the Chicago Convention, determined to obstruct all business until their demands are conceded," and Nonconformists were reminded that all other reforms, including Disestablishment, were till then indefinitely postponed.



## "SHUT IN!"

THE OLD HEAVY GUNNER, "HANG IT ALL! I CAN'T GET THROUGH!"  
 CHIEF-CLERK OF "LIBERAL UNIONIST,"  
 CLERK OF "SUFFRAGE."

CLERK OF "FARM BILL."

REPRESENTATIVE OF "LIBERAL UNIONIST."

*Punch* cartoon, May 28th, 1887.





A measure for Local Government in Ireland had, at the opening of the Autumn Session, been promised for February, 1887; but when the time came for the promise to be redeemed, urgency was voted for the Crimes Bill. This measure aroused constant and fierce opposition from the Irish and their allies, because the Act did not expire at any given time, and therefore would not have to be renewed; its merit was that its operations could be suspended in any district which quieted down, and during Mr. Arthur Balfour's administration of the law as Chief Secretary for Ireland (1887—1892), order was so far restored that in 1892 the Act was practically in abeyance. It was in many ways an improvement on previous Coercion Acts, while embodying some of their provisions—*e.g.*, "change of venue"—and could be put in force at any time where necessary by proclamation. Though altering the method of trial, it did not allow of imprisonment without trial, as did the Coercion Act under which Mr. Parnell was imprisoned during Mr. Gladstone's Administration.

Parnell's Tenants' Relief Bill had been thrown out in September, 1886, and in October the "Plan of Campaign" was announced in *United Ireland*, with the explanation that it was a plan by means of which "practically half a year's rent from any estate is put together to fight the landlords."

Now that Mr. Gladstone was unable to give them Home Rule, the behaviour of the Irish Members was such that their new allies could not feel comfortable, more particularly when they read of the incredible cruelty with which the Plan was being enforced. Nevertheless, the Gladstonians voted against the Crimes Bill, which was intended to put a stop to organised tyranny and outrage, both of which had increased since the Plan had been in use.

The state of Ireland under the Plan of Campaign has been almost forgotten in these quieter times, but it explains the anxiety of the Liberal Unionists for a strong Coercion Act. To appreciate the real significance of the uncompromising

opposition offered by the Unionist party to Mr. Parnell's demands, it is necessary to remember that his alliance with the American-Irish, or "Physical Force Party," was indisputably proved; and he never denied that he derived his funds from them. The connection was not a nominal one. Frank Byrne, the Secretary of the Irish Parliamentary party—the "Constitutional party"—was one of them, and his wife—"the brave little woman," *fêted* in America by the American-Irish—carried from London to Dublin the knives wherewith Mr. Burke and Lord Frederick Cavendish were assassinated. After the trial of the assassins, Byrne went to America, where he described the Home Rule Bill as "a miserable farce," adding:—

"No sentimental bosh should be allowed to tie our hands. The torch, the knife, and dynamite are weapons which are at the disposal even of an unarmed and poverty-stricken nation like ours. England has taken good care to deprive us of all other weapons, and in God's name let us use those we have at once, without hesitation and without mercy."

In the spring of 1887 Mr. Chamberlain made a short tour in Scotland, where he spoke several times, defending the Crimes Act and drawing a striking picture of the state of things which it was designed to stop. On one occasion, when describing at Ayr (in April) the horrible outrages which made the Crimes Act necessary, from the back of the hall came suddenly a cry: "*Watch yourself!*"

Amid the confusion which followed—the cries of "Police," and "Put that man out"—Mr. Chamberlain was quite unmoved. "No," he said, "bring that man up here."

"Now, gentlemen," he continued, "you have before you an instance of the demoralisation of politics which has been produced by the action of the leaders of the Liberal party. I am relating to you facts which at least I should have supposed even opponents would listen to with horror and shame. And when I tell you of assassination, there is

a man in this hall who says '*Take care of yourself.*' Has the time come when we cannot discuss political matters in this country without bandying threats of assassination? Those are the proceedings of the parties who were represented at the Convention of Chicago.

"You are told that the Crimes Act is a Bill for the repression of liberty. Liberty to do what? Liberty to commit theft, liberty to injure women, liberty to ruin industrious men? (Hisses and cheers.) Which are you hissing—the crime or the punishment?"

Mr. Chamberlain then reminded the audience what manner of crimes they were that the Act was intended to suppress. A man named Byars had taken temporary charge of a farm from which a tenant had been evicted. The League law was broken; he must pay the penalty. From that time he had to be guarded by two policemen. Returning home one night so guarded, a volley was poured into the three men from both sides of the road. The farmer died almost immediately. So great was the fear in the country round, that no coffin could be procured; his widow was jeered and hooted at as she walked by her murdered husband's body. In another case a small tenant named Murphy paid three pounds a year rent for his farm. One night, when sitting with his wife and children by the fire at home, eight masked men came in and demanded his arms. He at once gave up a revolver which he had, and then they shook hands with him, telling him not to be afraid. In a moment one of them came back, shot the poor fellow in the legs, "tearing off his foot by the ankle, leaving him to die an hour or two afterwards."

The National League was proclaimed over the greater part of Ireland in September, and in October William O'Brien was imprisoned for three months for inciting tenants to resist eviction, as were several other Irish Members, including the Lord Mayor of Dublin. When in the autumn there was a riot in Trafalgar Square—the police trying to suppress a meeting, the people

Suppression  
of National  
League.  
September,  
1887.

trying to hold it—the Irish Members declared that it was a repetition of the “Mitchelstown Fray,” in which the Irish police, driven back by the people into barracks, fired on the crowd, killing one and fatally wounding two. After the imprisonment of the Irish M.P.’s, things became a little quieter, as the beneficent working of the new Land Act gradually grew evident and its opportunities were more appreciated by the tenants.

This Act had passed in August, 1887. By it the Government wished to settle the Land question fairly and deal with arrears of rent at the same time. But owing to the determined opposition of the Irish Members it was impossible to touch the latter question, so that though Mr. Chamberlain, after much trouble, secured the revision of the judicial rents (which had been fixed under the Land Act of 1881), the tenant might still remain burdened with “an overwhelming debt which he cannot possibly meet.” To obviate this he had proposed that the Land Court should be able to make a composition, if a composition were thought necessary and just, of all the tenant’s debts; in this way he would be relieved and have once more a fair chance. “It is no use to leave men,” he said, “upon the land if they are in a hopeless condition of insolvency.” Sir William Harcourt recommended that this proposal should be accepted, but Mr. Dillon absolutely refused to allow the clause to pass.

This revision of judicial rents had hitherto “been rejected almost without discussion,” and to break down their sanctity was to “adopt a principle more Radical than has ever been put before the British House of Commons,” said Mr. Chamberlain, who appreciated accordingly the concession thus made to him by his new allies the Conservatives.

In June, 1887, Mr. Chamberlain was entertained by the London Liberal Union Club, and made an important speech in which he expressed his “absolute confidence” in Lord Hartington. “Should he see his way to any arrangement [with Mr. Gladstone] we shall have no difficulty in following him. But for my own part I am no longer sanguine of

the possibility of reconciliation." In October, a long-formed plan of visiting Ulster and of speaking there on Home Rule and the Unionist policy was carried out. His presence was as bitterly resented by the Nationalists as it was eagerly welcomed by the Ulster Protestants.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### IN AMERICA

1887—1888

SETTLEMENT OF FISHERIES DISPUTE WITH AMERICA—RETURN TO  
ENGLAND—SPEECHES—SECOND VISIT TO AMERICA—MARRIAGE  
TO MISS ENDICOTT—WELCOME IN BIRMINGHAM

IN October, 1887, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Lionel Sackville West, and Sir Charles Tupper were selected by Lord Salisbury to be her Majesty's Plenipotentiaries **Fisheries Dispute.** to consider and adjust the long-standing dispute between Great Britain and the United States touching the fisheries off the Canadian and Newfoundland coasts. These disputes, which arose under certain articles in the Treaty of Peace, 1783, and the Treaty of 1818, caused severe friction from time to time between the two countries on account of the frequent seizures of American vessels.

The American Plenipotentiaries were Mr. Thomas F. Bayard, Mr. William L. Putnam, and Mr. James **Terms of the Treaty.** B. Angell, and a Treaty was eventually arranged on February 15th, 1888, granting American fishing vessels access to the coasts for wood, water, shelter, and repairs, and providing for the additional privileges of buying bait and stores, transhipment of catch, and shipping crews, so soon as the United States agreed to join Canada in free trade in fish and fish-oil.

Unfortunately, the United States refused to ratify the Treaty, but a Protocol added by the British Plenipotentiaries conferring upon American fishing vessels,—by way of *modus*

*vivendi* pending ratification of the Treaty,—the full advantages contemplated in the Treaty, on a yearly payment of one and a half dollars per ton, for two years, came into force.

American fishermen having thus obtained the full privileges desired at but nominal cost, all friction ceased, and the complete removal of the trouble was so welcome that the *modus vivendi* has been extended continuously ever since, and has now practically taken the place of the Treaty. On the immediate point at issue the United States more than gained the day, but the Chamberlain *modus vivendi* enunciated a liberal, broad-minded policy, harmonising with the requirements of civilised nations and neighbours, and constituting a distinct advance in international doctrine, although its application has so far been one-sided.

Mr. Chamberlain's despatch of February 16th, 1888, to Lord Salisbury gave a masterly summary of the difficulties disposed of, and showed that he had grasped the intricate technical points which run more or less through all international fishery disputes. The subsequent inclusion in his Cabinet of a Minister with this special knowledge must have been of no small benefit to Lord Salisbury in dealing with the Behring Sea question and the difficulties with France in Newfoundland.

Mr. Chamberlain returned to England in March, 1888, and received a very hearty welcome from his constituents, who presented him with the freedom of the borough of Birmingham, an honour which had never previously been bestowed. An opportunity of expressing the approval of the party generally was afforded by the meeting in April of the National Radical Union, at which a number of addresses were presented to Mr. Chamberlain from all parts of the country.

"I can see they are couched in too flattering terms," said Mr. Chamberlain in his reply, "but I understand and appreciate the spirit in which they have been presented. I can assure you that during my absence in America I followed all your proceedings with the greatest interest. I knew that

Return to  
England.  
March, 1888.

your good wishes attended me in the protracted negotiation in which I was engaged and that you would feel something like a personal satisfaction at any success which followed upon my efforts."

He then pointed out the importance of maintaining cordial relations with the United States, a doctrine which he has continued to preach with great fervour.

Almost immediately after his return to England (April, 1888) he reviewed at Birmingham the position and policy of the respective political parties since the coalition between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives.

**Review of  
Position  
of Parties,  
Birmingham,  
April, 1888.**

"Never, in my opinion, has our position been stronger, never has it been more firmly established. . . . Meantime, domestic legislation in England and Scotland as well as in Ireland, is proceeding with steady strides. Last Session the miners of the United Kingdom, the agricultural labourers, the Irish tenants, all received a substantial measure of relief."

Peace and prosperity were slowly returning to Ireland, and the introduction of the Local Government Bill, one of which any Liberal Minister might be proud, would do much to help matters there.

"The old party lines have entirely disappeared. We have to deal with Unionists on the one hand and Parnellites on the other. This is a great fact which the country is beginning to appreciate. We may, if we like, recall the old party names; they no longer represent the old party ideas. The Tory party is not what it was. The Liberal party—where is that party now? A common danger has united us all against a common foe . . . and as a result of this a national party has at last been brought into existence. It will draw to itself all those who set National Interest and National Honour above party and personal matters. A future historian may yet write of the bitter controversy which has divided us that its evils have cheaply purchased the knowledge that the great majority of the British nation are proud of the Empire—the glorious and united Empire—to which they





GOVERNOR JOHN ENDICOTT OF MASSACHUSETTS.

From an oil painting in the possession of Mrs. Chamberlain.



belong. They are sensible of the responsibilities which its citizenship entails and of the privileges which it confers, and they will never be either tempted or bullied into their surrender."

The alliance between the Unionists and Conservatives had not always worked smoothly.

"It was natural that there should be a certain amount of distrust between those who had been lifelong opponents. But in the time that has elapsed much of this distrust has disappeared. . . . There has arisen a real sense of the advantage of this alliance and a determination to maintain it."

In a speech at Bradford, delivered during a disturbed meeting which Mr. Chamberlain managed with admirable temper and adroitness, he protested against the contention that the Unionists had left Mr. Gladstone on a matter of detail merely.

"What," he asks, "has made it possible for me, who have been all my life a Liberal and Radical? (Hooting and cheers.) Do you hoot that statement—do you object to the fact that I am a Radical? (Laughter). I say there has been a change which has made it possible that I, who have been a Radical all my life and who have not changed one of the opinions which I have ever expressed, should support heartily and cordially a Government every member of which, with one exception, is a Conservative—and a change which has made it possible for the Liberal party to transform themselves into the allies of Mr. Parnell, to be hand and glove with the men whom three years ago they denounced from every platform as the enemies of this country, and whose policy and methods they repudiated with scorn and with indignation."

These were the men "who a short time ago were praying in public for the success of the Zulus, who were praying for a Russian War—are you certain that these men would bear their fair share of the sacrifices which would be entailed in such an emergency?" [if this country were once more involved in war for its very existence].

Bradford  
September,  
1888.  
"Union of  
Hearts."

The Unionists had been promised if they would put Mr. Gladstone back into office that there would be a final settlement of the Irish question and a "Union of hearts."

"Are you sure the 'union of hearts' would endure such a strain? And yet it is a risk of this kind, a tremendous risk—a risk which involves the very existence of the nation, the loss of its gigantic commerce, and the ruin and disaster which would follow its loss—that you are asked to face with a light heart."

The Liberals, who, by their alliance with the Parnellites, had made this risk a real one, reminded him of the Girondists, men of culture, intelligence, and respectability, who placed their talents at the service of the French Revolution; they thought that they were guiding the storm, when in reality they were being swept away by it.

In May 1888 Mr. Chamberlain was elected President of the Birmingham Liberal-Unionist Association. Some articles were then being published in the Birmingham *Daily Post* on "A Unionist Policy for Ireland." These articles were afterwards collected and published, with a Preface by Mr. Chamberlain, who says,—

"For my part, I believe it is in this direction that the ultimate solution of the Irish question is to be found;" but the policy set forth did not claim to be a "final or authoritative statement of the views of any section of the Unionist party."

The policy was sketched under three heads—Public Works, Land Purchase, and Local Government.

In his speech on this occasion Mr. Chamberlain stated in a few sentences the line of division between the Unionists and Mr. Gladstone.

"For my part, I never will recognise a separate political nationality in Ireland. . . . I do not speak of the sentimental nationality; but if you are willing to recognise the political nationality of Ireland, you must accept all the logical consequences of that admission. You must give to Ireland all

the prerogatives of a separate nation. . . [a separate Parliament, Executive, Church, Customs, Army]. And be sure of this, if you take the first step, you will not be able to refuse the succeeding ones. It was this, in my mind, which constituted a fatal objection to Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, and it is by this we ought to be prepared to test any further proposals which he may make at any future time."

When Mr. Chamberlain again journeyed to America in November 1888, he went to receive the acknowledgment of his success in negotiating a treaty of a different kind. The members of the Washington Cabinet, which included the Hon. W. C. Endicott,

Mr. Chamberlain's  
Marriage,  
1888.

Minister of War in President Cleveland's first Administration, had given in 1887 many entertainments in honour of the British Plenipotentiaries, and on one of these occasions Mr. Chamberlain was introduced to his future wife, Miss Mary Endicott.

The founder of the New England branch of the Endicott family was Governor John Endicott of Massachusetts, a Dorsetshire man who sailed from England in the *Abigail*, June 20th, 1628. He ruled the Colony firmly and wisely, being distinguished for his just dealings with the Indians and for his sternness to all Anabaptists, Papists, and other such gentry. With his own hand he cut out of the British flag the Red Cross of St. George as being a Papistical emblem, and the sword with which he did it remains to this day.

At some little distance from Salem a large grant of land was given to the Governor, and though much of his time was necessarily spent in Boston in discharge of his official duties, yet he was often at the Orchard Farm, Danvers, now in the possession of Mr. W. C. Endicott, Junior, Mrs. Chamberlain's only brother. Her mother was a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Peabody, a family which also has long been connected with Danvers.

The Hon. William Crowninshield Endicott, whose death occurred very suddenly in May, 1900, was directly descended

from Governor Endicott, and from the Putnam family, who took an honourable part in the French and Indian Wars, as well as in the War of Independence, when General Israel Putnam led the American forces at Bunker's Hill (June, 1775).

Mr. Endicott was born at Salem in 1827, and graduated at Harvard where he studied law. In 1873 he was appointed Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, an office which he resigned in 1882. After his retirement from the Bench, accompanied by his family he spent some time in a European tour, during which Miss Endicott had the opportunity of visiting England. Eighteen months after their return to America her father took office, and the family moved to Washington, where in the autumn of 1887, at the British Legation, Miss Endicott first met the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain.

The engagement was not made public till Mr. Chamberlain's return to New York in November 1888. The marriage, which was very quiet, took place on the 15th. The ceremony was performed by Dr. Leonard (now Bishop of Ohio) and the Rev. J. P. Franks, of Grace Church, Salem. The President, Mrs. Cleveland, and all the members of the Cabinet were present. Many tokens of good-will were received by Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain, not the least valued of which were some simple home-made gifts from Birmingham working-men.

On their arrival at Highbury, after a honeymoon on the Riviera, Mrs. Chamberlain saw for the first time, her husband's family and relations. Shortly afterwards she was welcomed by his friends and constituents in the Town Hall, Birmingham (January 1889). Accompanying the addresses presented from the citizens of Birmingham, Mr. Chamberlain's constituents, and the Women's Liberal Association, were gifts of jewellery made by the jewellers in Mr. Chamberlain's constituency of West Birmingham.

"The lady of your choice, sir," so ran the address, "would always be welcome in Birmingham, but her welcome is the warmer because she has come from our kinsfolk across the seas to reside in a city which has many ties with America."

In returning thanks for the welcome accorded to his wife, Mr. Chamberlain said :—

“I was fortunate enough to make two treaties. I had my secret document as well as the public document with which you are all familiar, and I am glad to say that even the august Senate of the United States had nothing to say to my private negotiations, which you have ratified to-night by your presents and proceedings.”

He added, with a smile : “I have done all in my power to promote union between the two countries,” a sentiment which was received with affectionate laughter.

He had vainly tried to persuade Mrs. Chamberlain that she had given up her own nationality and become an Englishwoman, but he added—though he had failed, “I know she is prepared to take up her life among us in this country to which she has come, in all its fulness, and that she will say with Ruth of old, ‘Thy people shall be my people.’”

“I can only say for myself that all the pleasure I have ever felt in political strife, all the strength that has been given me to pursue it, have been increased by the sense, which has never failed me, that I have always had behind me the support of the people who have known me best, who have made me what I am, and whose support has never failed me in every time of difficulty and has laid me under a weight of obligation which I am only too anxious to acknowledge, and which I can never adequately repay.”

After referring to the cordiality of Birmingham men wherever he met them and their willingness to renew their acquaintance with him, he said : “I have been touched and gratified by a note which I received from a Birmingham man in the wilds of Canada, who sent me his congratulations and good wishes, and a little token of regard and gratitude in the shape of a sample of his skill. I am prouder of it—of having excited this feeling amongst my fellow-townsmen—than I am of anything else in my public life.”

## CHAPTER XXV

### UNIONIST LEGISLATION (DOMESTIC AND IRISH)

1888—1892

COMPLETING THE SOCIAL PROGRAMME—FREE EDUCATION—ALLOTMENTS ACT—HOUSING OF THE WORKING-CLASSES ACT, 1890—IRELAND: PARNELL COMMISSION—*FORTNIGHTLY* ARTICLE, "LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND IRELAND"—LAND ACT 1891—IRISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL (1892) WITHDRAWN—UNIONIST MEASURES FOR IRELAND 1887—1892.

IN 1888 Mr. Chamberlain reviewed the work already accomplished by Lord Salisbury's Government in alliance with the Liberal-Unionists. In this completion of the Social Programme, which he considered of greater urgency than a revolution in our method of governing Ireland, he had a large, if an indirect, share. Between 1887 and August 1892 the following measures, among many others, were enacted, exclusive of legislation for Ireland:—

Completing  
the Social  
Programme.

- 1887. { Coal Mines Regulation Act.  
Merchandise Marks Act.  
Allotments Act (which admitted the principle of compulsion).
- 1888. Local Government Act [England and Wales] (Creation of County Councils).
- 1889. { Local Government Act for Scotland.  
Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act  
Public Bodies' Corrupt Practices Act (Prevention of Bribery).



1890. { Police Pensions Act.  
Housing of the Working Classes Amendment Act  
New Education Code.  
1891. { Factory and Workshops Act, (better regulation of  
conditions in).  
Free Education Act for England and Wales.  
1892. { Agricultural Holdings Act (Mr. Chaplin's—facilitating  
small holdings).

Mr. Chamberlain's Unauthorised Programme asked for Local Government, Free Schools, Small Holdings, Graduated Taxation. On comparing these items with the previous list it will be seen that the first three had now become law, and thus the Unauthorised Programme was almost completed. The original programme with which Mr. Chamberlain was equipped when he entered political life, comprised Free Schools, Free Land, Free Church: the first part was in 1892 accomplished, and a part of the second. The third might perhaps have been attempted, had not Ireland blocked the way, and had not Mr. Chamberlain come to feel that, desirable as Disestablishment was theoretically, it was not (as political history had shaped itself) yet within the domain of practical politics. Further, it was not a subject on which he was likely to get a majority sufficient to carry it in the House, and the Liberal-Unionists might risk two dangers if they insisted on pressing for it. Firstly, a fresh split in a new direction might occur, and the settlement of parties be again disturbed—the number of sections thus created preventing any combination powerful enough for effective legislative work. Secondly, this shattering of the Unionist party might open the way to the dismemberment of the Empire by the separation of Ireland, if the Home Rule party profited by the serious dissensions which must be caused by an uncompromising demand for Disestablishment on the part of the Liberal Unionists.

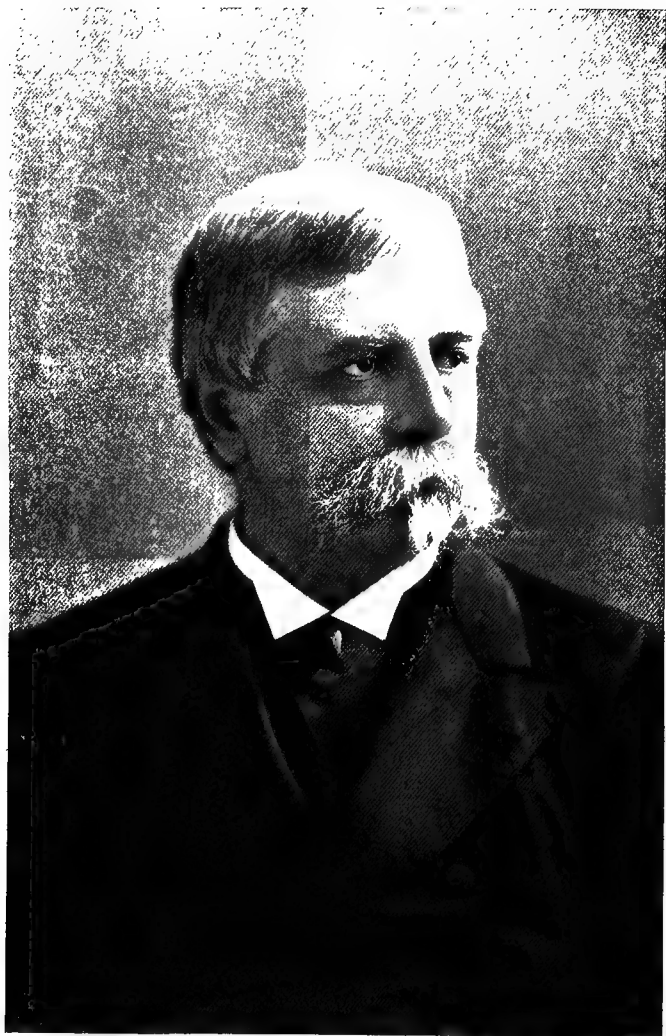
Apart from these considerations, there was the immediate pressing need for doing other work, principally something to make the life of the working man easier. In the years

of plenty we are apt to forget the barren years. But the dock-strike of 1889, when seventy-five thousand men joined the strikers, the winters of 1891 and 1892, when bands of "Out-of-Work" men paraded our streets, and the appalling sufferings of the early part of 1895, when the great frost held week after week, cannot easily be forgotten by those who know much of the lives of the poor. Royal Commissions were appointed, and duly sat ; but their nett result in alleviating distress was small, and the operation of new and beneficent legislation was painfully slow. But it was well worth while to attempt to get the labourers back to the land on small holdings, and to prevent the incursions of fresh countrymen into the towns by giving them allotments which would enable them to cross the border line between starvation and subsistence.

In the matter of education some relief might be offered. **Allotments and Distress.** School pence seem a very small item, but even the **Free Education.** relief from this payment was much to an almost starving man, who would fain see his children at school and not running wild about the streets. At school the child was kept warm and sheltered ; in many towns great efforts were made to feed the destitute, and there could be no doubt that the child who attended school regularly, was likely to get more fire and food than the child who was kept at home for want of pence to send with him. In Birmingham a great and splendid effort was made to feed the children by means of "Halfpenny Dinners."

Free education had been one of Mr. Chamberlain's earliest and fondest dreams, entertained by him long before he entered Parliament, and though he was not a Member of the Government which realised it, he could honestly claim a great, if not a preponderating share in its fulfilment.

When school fees were abolished, a grant of ten shillings per head was made, in lieu of the parents' payments ; but this sum was found to be insufficient, in some cases, to meet the expenses. In 1896, therefore, this grant was supplemented by further aid given **Aid to Voluntary Schools.**



THE LATE HON. WILLIAM C. ENDICOTT, MRS. CHAMBERLAIN'S FATHER.



to Voluntary schools: after prolonged and hot debate, this aid was also extended to those necessitous Board schools which could not make both ends meet. Though Board schools, by raising the rates, might partially supply the deficit caused by the abolition of school fees, Voluntary schools could only supply this deficit by increased voluntary subscriptions; these were drawn largely from the village magnates and country gentry, who now found it difficult and almost impossible to give permanent extra help in consequence of continued agricultural depression. In certain cases the new Educational Authority constituted by the Act might supersede decaying Voluntary schools.

A section of the Nonconformist party was bitterly opposed to the aid thus extended to Voluntary schools, and they were quite unable to reconcile Mr. Chamberlain's support of this Bill with his former determined advocacy of undenominational education. But in the old days the one system tyrannised over the other, and when, in 1870, education became compulsory, many parents who desired undenominational education were often practically forced to send their children to denominational schools, for in many districts Board schools did not exist. But after free education was granted in 1891, the two systems became co-workers, doing the same work in two different ways. Theoretically it was possible for any parent, all education being free, to choose the education he preferred for his child, though actually it was not always practicable. If the efforts of Voluntary schools could be supported without unfairness to the ratepayer, it would be in the interests of all to give that support, for should such schools be abolished, an enormous extra educational burden would be incurred; in fact it was estimated that to sweep them away and insist on efficiently replacing them with Board schools, would mean a capital outlay of fifty millions and a yearly expenditure of five. It would, moreover, have been incurring a great responsibility to wipe out, or starve out, the educational machinery which had been doing good work for very many years.

A further consideration was not to be lightly dismissed. By closing the Voluntary schools the State then took upon itself to refuse systematic religious instruction to thousands of parents who undoubtedly desired such instruction to be given. This was, even to a man who wished for the separation of Church and State, a very grave responsibility. Though it may be a parent's duty to instruct his children in religious matters, nevertheless many parents, who not only appreciate but earnestly desire such instruction, are unable or unwilling to give it. Neither could a State school give it. Was the State now more justified in refusing denominational education to those who wished for it, than it had been in refusing undenominational education in the old days?

The work of Mr. Jesse Collings, combined with Mr. **Allotments Act, 1887.** Chamberlain's crusade on behalf of the agricultural labourers and small tenants, during the fight for the franchise, and when he was advocating his Unauthorised Programme, largely contributed to the passing of the Allotments Act of 1887, and Mr. Chaplin's Small Holdings Bill of 1892; this legislation has been supplemented by further measures in the Parliament of 1895—1900.

In 1883, in an article in the *Fortnightly*, Mr. Chamberlain had pointed out the difficulty which Municipal Corporations experienced in obtaining land in the vicinity of towns, even for necessary sanitary improvements. Much more difficult was it to obtain land at a rental low enough to afford town dwellers the chance of cultivating allotments. After the "Bitter Cry of Outcast London" appeared, a Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor (March 1884) was appointed, and Mr. Chamberlain gave valuable evidence as to what had been done in Birmingham, and the difficulty Corporations experienced in acquiring land at a reasonable price. So long, he said, as compensation on the present scale for compulsory purchase was enforced by law, it paid owners of property to allow it to fall into such a state, or to be used for such purposes that it became a public nuisance, and had to be compulsorily acquired,

"If," said Mr. Chamberlain, in his article on "Labourers' and Artisans' Dwellings" in the *Fortnightly*, December, 1883, "they succeed in aggravating the nuisance, till it is intolerable their fortunes are made." For example, when a disorderly house, for which an enormous rent is asked and paid, is required by the local authority, "the demand for the compensation is based, and often allowed, on an income which represents, *not a fair return for an investment, but the profit on complicity with vice.* . . .

"The sound principle of compensation should be the real value of the land and buildings used under legitimate conditions, and not on the exorbitant value arising from criminal practices."

Thus, owners of property declared unfit for habitation had, under the Acts of 1895 and 1899, in some parts of London, "received 17s. per foot for land, which could not be valued, after the improvements had been made and new streets laid out, at more than 10s. for commercial purposes and 3s. 4d. for artisans' dwellings." In such cases, criminal neglect and use of property resulted in the owners obtaining 13s. 8d. per foot more than the land was fairly worth for the purpose for which they had been employing it, and a premium for neglect and wilful indifference to sanitary provisions was thus offered. No wonder the great cost of improvements deterred local authorities under these conditions.

The principle Mr. Chamberlain laid down was that "the expense of making towns habitable for the toilers who dwell in them must be thrown on the land, which, without any efforts on the part of the owners, has been made valuable by the toil of the workers."

By the *Housing of the Working Classes Act* of 1890, a number of measures dealing with the housing problem and with Labourers' Lodging-houses (in force between 1875 and 1885) were repealed, and the existing legislation on this subject was improved and simplified. The Act of 1890 dealt with the rights of Local Authorities in respect of unhealthy areas and insanitary buildings, and of their power to acquire land or buildings for lodging-houses for the working classes.

**Housing of  
the Working  
Classes  
Amendment  
Act, 1890.**

In the autumn of 1888, the Special Commission on Ireland—*"Parnellism and Crime"* began their sittings. The *Times* had published a number of letters (in particular one relating to the Phoenix Park murders) which, purporting to be written by Parnell, would have implicated him in those murders and in most of the crimes committed during the Land League agitation in Ireland. Parnell at first contented himself with denying that he wrote them; he did not appear to court inquiry into the charges made against him. But they could not be passed over, and a Special Commission of judges was appointed to investigate them, for a Parliamentary Commission must have shown some party bias; its finding, of whatever nature, would not have been accepted as impartial.

Happily the letters proved to be the celebrated "Pigott forgeries." The author, after confessing the forgery, escaped to Spain and committed suicide (March 1889). Unhappily, however, the inquiry revealed so much of direct and indirect incitement to crime, and public condonation of law-breaking, that, though Mr. Parnell and his friends were cleared from the imputation of the forged letters, they were legally "proven" guilty of other charges not much less serious in the eyes of law-abiding people. The investigations were continued in 1889, and the report of the Commission was presented to parliament in March 1890, and was ordered to be printed in the journals of the House of Commons.

Mr. Chamberlain, in his speech in the House, March 1890, during the Debate on the Report of the Special Commission, answered Lord Randolph Churchill's contention that the appointment of the Commission was unconstitutional. It was, he said, in every way a fairer inquiry than could have been conducted by a Committee of the House or a Parliamentary Commission. It had been alleged that the Parnell Commission was his "pet proposal." "I never heard of it until it was suggested by the Government," he said; "in my judgment the circumstances have shown that they were right."

**Ireland—  
The Parnell  
Commission  
appointed.  
Autumn 1888.**

**Debate on  
the Report,  
March 1890.**



It was also said during the debate that the findings of the judges related to "venial and trivial offences." One of these findings proved there was no denunciation by Mr. Parnell of the actions of the "Physical Force" party, and that Michael Davitt was in "close and intimate association with the party of violence in America."

"Is that a trivial offence?" asked Mr. Chamberlain. "What was the Physical Force party? It was a party whose publicly avowed and professed object was to assassinate public men and to lay our chief cities in ruins. . . . I say there is no parallel in these transactions to any popular or patriotic movement in the world. There is no case in which men, professing to carry on a constitutional agitation, met their opponents in fair debate and at the same time were in close and intimate alliance with men who, by their published newspapers, declared that their object was to assassinate those same opponents, and cause injury and ruin to the countrymen of those so-called constitutional leaders."

"Is no reparation due to us, who for months and years were followed by police, even into our homes in order to protect us against the agents of the friendly society of the Hon. member for East Fife?" [Mr. Asquith had likened the Clan-na-Gael to a "friendly" Society.]

"To compare action of this kind to the action of Bright and Cobden [during the Corn-Law agitation] is simply an insult to those great men."

Were the Liberal Unionists and Government doing anything for Ireland? Were they now taking in hand those matters which Mr. Chamberlain, no less heartily than Mr. Gladstone, had declared were of the greatest urgency—the Reform of the Land Laws and the extension of Local Government?

In his article (of July 1885 in the *Fortnightly*) on "Local Government and Ireland," Mr. Chamberlain showed the practical working of "The Castle"—the centralised form of government imposed upon the Irish by those whom they considered an alien race. Among the departments managed by, or controlled in some way from, the "Castle," were the

Irish Local Government Board, the Grand Jury (who had the entire control of the fiscal affairs of each county), the Prisons Board, the Asylums Board, the Education Board for Primary and Intermediate Education. "The Castle" also appointed the Stipendiary and often the Unpaid Magistrates, the Metropolitan Police, and the Rural Police or Constabulary.

To sweep away this system would, he said, "be as great a boon to governors as governed." "The Castle" could not obtain trustworthy information as to the wishes and wants of the Irish people, because there was no trustworthy means of communication between the people and the Governors, who, to make matters more difficult, were often of an alien religion. A proper system of Local Government would give a fair field for Irish ability and ambition—it would relieve Imperial Parliament from such unnecessary work, and would entrust it to able men on the spot.

But Mr. Chamberlain always maintained that advanced Local Government could not be given until the Land question and the feud between owner and tenant had been settled. Lord Ashbourne's Act had done much to encourage industrious cultivators to become owners, and had made their path in this direction fairly easy. But by this Act the money was borrowed from England, and in any final and comprehensive scheme, he contended, repayment of loans must be undertaken entirely by Irish credit and Irish resources. Thus public feeling in favour of the discharge of just obligations and against the defaulter, would be secured by the strong motive of self-interest.

This method of repayment of loans was employed by the Government in Mr. Balfour's Land Act of 1891, and when its operations became rightly understood and the loans under the Ashbourne Act were discontinued, it was largely successful.

In 1890 Mr. Balfour and his sister went, practically unattended, on a tour through some of the most dissatisfied and poorest of the Western districts of Ireland, in order that

Mr. Chamberlain's  
Proposals  
of 1885.

Mr. Balfour's  
Land Act,  
1891.

the Chief Secretary might see as far as possible with his own eyes what the condition of the people was. As one result of his visit, the Congested Districts Board was constituted, with a million and a half of money to expend in light railways, and in the expansion or the creation of industries adapted to the capabilities of the Irish peasants. For example, fishing-boats were supplied and facilities for disposing of the catch were given; seed potatoes were sold to tenants at cost price to be repaid by instalments; money was spent in road-making, drainage, and other public works. The law was enforced, where necessary, by the Crimes Act, and Ireland gradually became quieter and the people more fit to be entrusted with added powers of Local Government.

But though the people were ready for the Local Government Bill, their members were not. It was at all times hard for the Nationalists to acknowledge that Ireland was growing quieter or more contented, or more prosperous, under any other policy than their own. It gave the lie to their contention that the English had practically made Ireland "a hell upon earth."

Mr. Balfour's Irish Local Government Bill was introduced in February 1892, and the Government secured the big majority of ninety-two for their second reading, but the real fight, as in all important measures, had to come in Committee. A dissolution was imminent, and so contemptuous of the Bill was Mr. O'Brien that during the debate on the Second Reading he offered to "swop" the uncontested passage of the Bill for a dissolution, confident that the new Government would be one which would give the Irish Home Rule. Mr. Chamberlain, who was speaking at the time, turned on him at once—"Were I on the Treasury Bench I should advise my colleagues to accept that offer—a liberal offer, to which I call the attention of Her Majesty's Government." But when closer pressed the rest of the Irish were inclined to draw back.

"I cannot," said Mr. Chamberlain, "emulate the language of the hon. member" (Mr. O'Brien), who had characterised

**Irish Local  
Government  
Bill, 1892.**

this Bill as "vile, ridiculous, illusory, a mockery, insolent, shabby, ridiculous, a practical joke, founded on monstrous absurdities, abounding in mischief, and an affront to fifteen millions of Irish throughout the world."

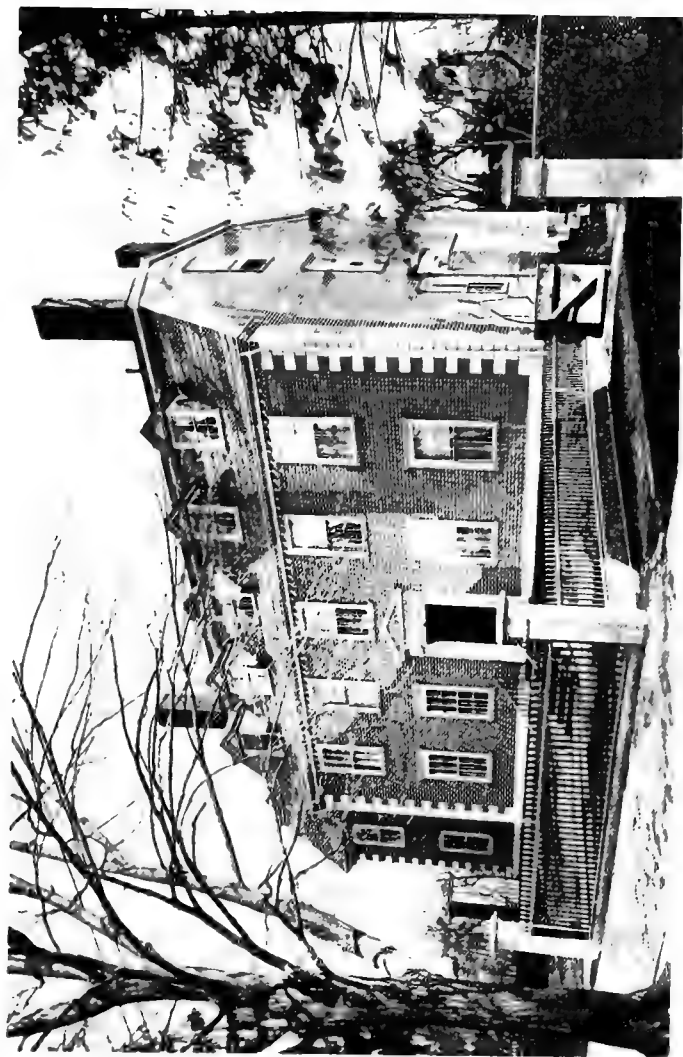
"I confess," added Mr. Chamberlain, "that these epithets would impress me very much, did I not know that it is 'only pretty Fanny's way.'"

But the Bill had to be withdrawn, as there was not time to get it through Committee before the Session of 1892 ended. Though all the Irish reforms which Mr. Chamberlain hoped for were not yet accomplished, something substantial had been done; and if the dissolution could have been deferred till the Irish Local Government Bill of 1892 had passed, the Unionists would have been in a much better position to appeal to the country.

The Unionist list of Irish measures, passed since 1887 included—

- 1887. { The Crimes Act, which proclaimed the worst districts.
- 1887. { The Land Act, authorising the revision of Judicial rents.
- 1888. { Land Purchase Act (voting ten millions on the lines of the Ashbourne Act).
- 1889. Improved Drainage and Light Railways Act.
- 1890. { Further facilities for Light Railway construction.
- 1890. { Congested Districts Act.
- 1891. { Land Purchase Act (Balfour's).
- 1891. { Long Leaseholders admitted to advantages of Land Purchase Act.
- 1892. { February. Irish Local Government Bill introduced.
- 1892. { March. Majority of ninety-two on Second Reading.
- 1892. { March. Withdrawn.
- 1892. { June. *Dissolution.*

In October 1891 Mr. Parnell died suddenly. For a year his influence had been diminishing, his authority had been questioned. His followers had been divided since Mr. Gladstone expressed his opinion that Mr. Parnell could not



THE ENDICOTT FAMILY MANSION, SALEM, MASS., U.S.A.



retain his leadership of the Irish Party, if he (Mr. Gladstone) was to work with that party for Home Rule. This decision was the result of the verdict against Mr. Parnell in the O'Shea-Parnell divorce case.

The Irish leader refused to accept Mr. Gladstone's decision and henceforth the Parnellites and the anti-Parnellites were bitter enemies. There are those who think that from the date of Mr. Parnell's fall dates the real decline of Home Rule.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### *THE UNIONIST IN OPPOSITION*

1892—1895

THE ELECTIONS OF 1892—MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN—HIS MAIDEN SPEECH—POSITION OF LIBERAL UNIONISTS IN BIRMINGHAM AND MIDLANDS—THE SECOND HOME RULE BILL—MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S SPEECH—THE HOME RULE DUEL—THE LORDS THROW OUT THE BILL—MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S ARTICLES—THE ROSEBERY ADMINISTRATION—DOMESTIC LEGISLATION BETWEEN 1892 AND 1895—LORD ROSEBERY AND THE PEERS.

**MR.** CHAMBERLAIN'S opponent in the election of 1892 was Mr. Corrie Grant, who polled 1,879 votes as against 6,297. In 1885, before the split in the Liberal party, when all the seats in Birmingham were contested, Mr. Chamberlain's majority had been 2,764; it was now 4,418 and he polled more votes than seven years before.

General  
Election,  
June-July  
1892.

His son, Joseph Austen, who had been returned unopposed at a bye-election a few months before, again stood for East Worcestershire, a constituency comprising a large district, in one part of which Highbury (his father's house) is situated.

Mr. Austen Chamberlain, was born in 1863, and was educated at Rugby and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated in 1885, in the Historical Tripos. It is curious that the sons of four men connected with University College, London, and the school



of that name, graduated at the same time from Trinity College, Cambridge, though their fathers had been prevented, as Dissenters, from entering any University. They were the sons of the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, Sir Michael Foster (now M.P. for London University), the late John Gibbs Blake, M.D., the well-known Birmingham physician and trustee of Birmingham University, and Wilson Fox, Esq., of Bristol—the four men belonging to the Unitarian, Congregational, Plymouth Brethren, and Quaker denominations respectively.

After taking his degree Mr. Austen Chamberlain spent nine months in Paris, studying at the *École des Sciences Politiques*, and nine months in Berlin. He acted as Junior Whip while the Liberal-Unionists were in Opposition, 1892-1895.

At a banquet held to celebrate Mr. Austen Chamberlain's return in January 1893, Mr. Chamberlain responded to the toast of "Our Cause," and began by saying: "I am very glad to be able to respond to your toast, and to confirm what has been said by your representative and mine." His son, in the course of his speech, dealt with the coming Home Rule Bill, and said that one thing he had always dreaded, and that was "speaking with his father close beside him." He did not make his maiden speech in the House until April 1893, when he interposed in the debate on the Home Rule Bill, and received from the Prime Minister a kindly compliment and a genial criticism, which showed unmistakably Mr. Gladstone's grand manner and great dignity.

The previous speakers, said Mr. Gladstone, had evaded the real point at issue.

"The only exception I remember, was in the speech of the hon. member for East Worcestershire (Mr. Austen Chamberlain). I will not embark on any elaborate eulogy of that speech. I will endeavour to sum up in a few words what I desire to say of it. It was a speech that must have been dear and refreshing to a father's heart."

Mr. Gladstone then proceeded to discuss the points it raised.

Mr. Chamberlain was deeply touched by the kindly, unexpected tribute, couched in such simple, friendly words. His son had spoken on the one subject which had caused an irrevocable breach between him and his former chief, yet Mr. Gladstone went out of his way to pay a tribute to his opponent's son.

A letter written by Dr. Dale during the elections of 1892 shows what a change had been wrought by the Home Rule controversy in the social life of Birmingham. The Liberal Club had failed and closed its doors in 1889 (the year of John Bright's death), and the old brilliant days of the Arts Club were over for ever.

"Birmingham is still a remarkable place, and I share your delight at the victory of last week [Unionist victory] but it seems to me that the interesting people are gone. . . . There was Dawson. . . Vince, John Henry Chamberlain and Harris, and Joseph Chamberlain in his fresh and brilliant promise. Dawson, Vince, and John Henry Chamberlain are dead; Harris remains, and is as kindly and epigrammatic as ever; but in the break-up of the Liberal Party he remained with Gladstone and I seldom see him.

"Joseph Chamberlain is, of course, still immensely interesting; but I am not sure that he is as interesting as he was twenty years ago, and he is necessarily much away from Birmingham. The time was when I used to have a smoke with him, and J. H. Chamberlain, and Timmins, and the rest, as often as twice or three times a week. The split of the Liberal Party has made an immense difference to my private life. There are two clubs and I belong to neither; I have friends on both sides, but the discussions that we had at the old Arts Club before the quarrel I look back upon with lasting regret. . . ."

Parliament met in August 1892, and Mr. Asquith's vote of Want of Confidence in the Ministers was carried on the 11th by 350 to 310. The Conservatives and Liberal-Unionists



*Photo by]*

*[Draycoll*

THE RIGHT HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN AND HIS SON, MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN, M.P. FOR EAST WORCESTERSHIRE, AFTER MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S RETURN FROM HIS AMERICAN MISSION.



combined after the elections numbered only 315 ; the Liberals 274, with 81 Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites.<sup>1</sup>

It was, of course, perfectly well known that Mr. Gladstone would lose no time in introducing another Home Rule Bill, now that he was once more in power.

The interest with which it was awaited was almost as great as that felt in the earlier Bill, and the rush to secure places (on February 13th), was even more extraordinary. The doors of the House were not open until twelve o'clock, and then the Members poured into the Chamber in one pushing, hustling, vociferating crowd. One white-haired Member, of an age almost that of the venerable Premier, was thrown down under the feet of the crowd. The Irish Members engaged in a tussle for places, which resembled a football scrimmage. "Mr. Chamberlain," said one paper, "would have lost his seat

**The Second  
Home Rule  
Bill,  
February  
13th, 1893.**

<sup>1</sup> The following table indicates in a striking way the Liberal strength in the Midland Counties (Warwick, Worcester, and Stafford) which include 39 constituencies (Borough and County divisions). In 1885 these constituencies returned 31 Liberals and 8 Conservatives, but in 1886, after the split in the Liberal Party, 13 Liberal Unionists were returned and 17 Conservatives showing "a body of Liberal Unionists of great numerical strength, though in want of adequate organisation." Accordingly the Midlands Liberal-Unionist Association was formed under the Presidency of Mr. Chamberlain (July 27th, 1892, and began work in the following September), in order to strengthen the party organisation in the Midlands, and secure in each District a properly organised committee which every Liberal-Unionist could join. Out of the 22,000 members already enrolled in 1894, Mr. Chamberlain said there was not one in a thousand who had ever belonged to a Conservative Association or would be willing to "sink themselves entirely in such an organisation." But if they did not maintain some such body (as the Liberal-Unionist Association) these men would necessarily drift to the Gladstonian party or remain outside politics altogether. . . . This organisation enabled them to maintain their "distinctive position, as men who have never abandoned their right to call themselves Liberals."

TABLE OF MEMBERS RETURNED AT GENERAL ELECTION.

		Conservative.		Liberal- Unionist.		Gladstonian.		Majority.
1885	...	8	...	—	...	31	(Liberals)	Liberal 23
1886	...	17	...	13	...	9		Unionist 21
1892	...	17	...	13	...	9		" 21
1895	...	19	...	14	...	6		" 27

had it not been for the dash and vigour of his son who held it until his father arrived." The Peers behaved even worse than the Commons: an extra force of police had to be sent for to keep them in order and to compel them to "stand back, gentlemen, please; stand back, please!"

Only the Treasury benches were respected; in the gallery, seats were kept for the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York only, but the Duke of Fife came too late, and could not get in. The Duchess of Teck and Princess May were also present.

Mr. Chamberlain interposed in the debate five days later.

He would endeavour to avoid as far as possible any discussion of the Bill as a party measure. He **Mr. Chamberlain's Speech, February 17th.** would examine it from only one standpoint—did it secure the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, and the Unity of Great Britain and Ireland? What was really meant by Imperial Unity? The tie between England and her dependencies varied in strength; did they mean Imperial Unity as between England and India, or England and the self-governing Colonies? The Liberal Home Rulers protested that they were not in favour of separation; but would not separation inevitably take place, if a tie no closer than that granted to the self-governing Colonies bound Ireland to England? Had Ireland been ten thousand miles away who could doubt she would have been a self-governing Colony long ago? Ireland was controlled by her geographical position, and her interests could not be allowed to outweigh those of the larger kingdom.

At this point in the speech the Irish Members looked "as though they would like to deny that Ireland was smaller than England," but they could not see their way to do it effectively. When Nationalist Members have so bitterly opposed the war in which England was engaged, although a large number of their countrymen were giving their lives for her service and her Queen, it is interesting to recall the almost prophetic words in which Mr. Chamberlain drew attention to what might happen in time of war—words at

which the Liberal allies of the Irish party scoffed, as painting an impossible contingency.

It was in war time that the ultimate test of the nature of the bond between two countries was made. Could we then demand or even expect troops to come to our aid from Canada or Australia? With an Irish Parliament sitting in Dublin would the Irish be willing to help us—would they sympathise with the mother country? Ireland would no doubt owe something to Great Britain, but would she not owe gratitude to France and America also? Should we be at war with one of these countries, on which side would Ireland stand? Was it not more than possible that the public opinion of Ireland, as represented by a Dublin Parliament, would be in favour of the power with which we were engaged in a struggle, perhaps for our very existence?

It was certain that this Bill would only be regarded by Irish members as an instalment—a preliminary to separation—[and their cheers confirmed this statement.]

On the other hand, the Bill would not settle Irish grievances. The Land question was to be reserved for the consideration of Imperial Parliament during three years. Until that time the Dublin Parliament would not be able to touch it. Irish members were to sit at Westminster but were not to vote on matters exclusively British [a distinction which Mr. Gladstone in his first Bill had declared it was "past the wit of man" to make satisfactorily]. But, so long as they could vote upon Imperial matters, especially upon vote of confidence, they had all British policy absolutely at their mercy, and thus even after a Dublin Parliament was conceded Irish Members could constantly interfere at Westminster also.

As for Ulster, she was to be abandoned; there were no effective safeguards for her. "This," said Mr. Chamberlain in his conclusion, "is a National Crime. . . . Never in the history of the world has a risk so tremendous been undertaken with such light-hearted indifference to its possible consequences."

The Bill was read a third time on September 1st, 1893, after the Commons had spent eighty-two days (all stages) in deliberation over it. The Lords made up their minds

with commendable, or disgraceful, promptness, according to the varying political view, and threw the Bill out after only four days' debate, on the second reading, by 419 to 41 votes.

During the whole time the Bill was under discussion in the Commons Mr. Chamberlain took a principal part in the struggle against it. He still believed that the Unity of the Empire was at stake, and the Home Rule duel between the Liberal-Unionist Leader and the Prime Minister was fought out to the end, Mr. Chamberlain being one of the most frequent and most able contributors to the attack on the measure at every stage. "Closure by Compartment," was used to force the Bill through, some fifteen to twenty clauses being "closed without discussion," among them being matters of supreme importance, concerning the proposed Irish Legislative Councils and Assembly, disagreements between the two Houses, the appointment of the Lord-Lieutenant and the Judges, the Postal and Telegraph Offices, the Savings Banks, the continuation of existing Laws, Courts, and Officers, etc., etc.

The country, said Mr. Labouchere (*Truth*, September 21st, 1893) took the rejection of the Bill "calmly, not to say apathetically." Three months later Mr. Dillon warned his allies that the moment Gladstonians relaxed their efforts and "were not loyally doing their best for Home Rule that moment we would turn against them." The prospects of Home Rule (in spite of his threat) were not improved by the resignation of Mr. Gladstone on March 3rd, 1894. Lord Rosebery then took office, but his government was defeated in fifteen months, and for a time Home Rule was "in a state of suspended animation"; many people believed that even if it had once (in 1886) been buried alive, by now it must certainly be dead.

The history of the Home Rule movement requires a volume to itself. The real desire at first, on both sides, to prevent a split in the Liberal Party, the negotiations which ensued, the essential divergence of thought and of principle



which could not be smoothed over, and prevented the best efforts of mediators from being successful—these things are often forgotten. The bitterness caused by the destruction of a united and powerful party devoted to a great leader, not unnaturally blinded men's eyes to the honesty of their opponents. Only those who withdrew for a time from the contest seemed able to keep their faith and charity unimpaired. But politicians could not retire into solitude and wait for their anger to cool; the fight went on, and the malignity of the accusations hurled at the leaders, now from one side, now from the other, increased rather than abated.

During the Gladstone-Rosebery Administration Mr. Chamberlain was occupying himself very considerably with social problems, more especially with that of "Old-Age Pensions" which he hoped to see before long brought within the range of practical politics. He was writing frequently at this time. The Home Rule Bill was discussed in the *Nineteenth Century* for April 1893 as "A Bill for the Weakening of Great Britain." "Old-age Pensions" and "The Labour Question" had appeared in 1892, and a study of American Municipal and Political methods, for which materials were collected during a tour in the Autumn of 1890, resulted in three articles—"Shall we Americanise our Institutions," (1890), "Favourable Aspects of State Socialism" (1891), "Municipal Institutions in America and England" (1892).

In 1889 Mr. Chamberlain had made a tour in Egypt and there studied the condition of the country.

After the defeat of the Home Rule Bill, an attempt was made by Mr. Gladstone, and continued by Lord Rosebery, to get through some of the accumulations of work which had been shelved to make room for Irish affairs. The Employers' Liability Bill came first. It was considered by the Unionists faulty in its method, and was withdrawn in consequence of an amendment insisted on by the House of Lords, that gave the power of contracting out. The Parish Councils Bill passed in March

**Rosebery  
Administration,  
1892-5.**

**Domestic  
Legislation  
between 1892  
and 1895.**

1894, and completed this section of the Unauthorised Programme.

The session had lasted since January 31st, 1893. Of the twelve measures promised in the Queen's Speech, two were passed—the Parish Councils Act and Railway Servants' Hours of Labour. Ten other measures mentioned as of "public utility" were withdrawn. During Lord Rosebery's Premiership an equally ambitious programme was attempted. Eleven measures were mentioned in the Queen's Speech in 1894. Two became law—Equalisation of Rates in London, and Local Government (Scotland). The Session of 1895 was chiefly taken up by an attempt to promote Welsh Disestablishment.

It was during this time that Lord Rosebery tried to rouse the nation against the Peers, who had acted as a buffer against the advanced policy which the Commons were advocating. When the House of Lords put a complete extinguisher on the new Home Rule light, they were told that they would shortly be invited to consider a Bill for their own disestablishment; or as the stock phrase had it the "ending or mending of the House of Lords," but as a number of their countrymen were on this occasion in sympathy with their action, the cry fell very flat.

*SECTION II*  
IN OFFICE—COLONIAL SECRETARY

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CHAPTER XXVII  
*THE RETURN TO POWER.—DOMESTIC AND IRISH  
POLICY*

1895—1900

DEFEAT OF LORD ROSEBERY'S GOVERNMENT—ELECTIONS JULY 1895  
—LIBERAL UNIONISTS IN THE SALISBURY ADMINISTRATION—  
THE COLONIAL SECRETARY—HIS INTEREST IN DOMESTIC LEGIS-  
LATION—WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT—ACQUISITION OF  
SMALL HOUSES BILL—OLD-AGE PENSIONS—IRELAND—LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT BILL 1898—MR. CHAMBERLAIN AT GLASGOW 1897  
—ADDRESS ON "PATRIOTISM" AS LORD RECTOR OF THE  
UNIVERSITY.

L ORD ROSEBERY'S Government was defeated on a motion to call attention to the inadequacy of the supply of cordite. It is true that the motion was carried by a majority of seven only, but it was sufficient for Lord Rosebery who is said to have welcomed the defeat as a happy release from the cares of an office which he filled with little pleasure to himself or satisfaction to his party, for which he was always either too fast or too slow; a party which in truth he could not be said to lead.

The subject on which the Government was defeated was insignificant in itself; but it indicated the change in the political outlook, and might be taken as a sign that for the future Imperial concerns were to take precedence of

departmental ones. Ireland was no longer to be the obstacle to Imperial legislation, which she had been almost uninterruptedly for fifteen years. Since 1880 the Irish jaunting car had "stopped the way" and neither the sober Tory carriage and pair, nor the dashing Radical mail phaeton had been able to pass. It was impossible to foretell on which side the Irish car would next be found, but it was certain that it managed to prevent either the Tory or the Radical vehicle from making any continuous progress.

The first business of the new Government was the General Election, which took place in July and resulted in one of the strongest majorities of late years. The Elections, July 1895. The Unionists mustered 411 Members, the Liberals 177, the Irish 82, giving the Government a majority of 152 over the combined Irish and Gladstonians, and the latter being now unable to offer their allies Home Rule, could not with any certainty count on the continuance of Irish support.

Mr. Chamberlain's opponent in this election was Dr. Bernard O'Connor, but if Gladstonian Home Rule was to make any impression on Birmingham it was a pity an abler exponent of it should not have come forward against the champion of Liberal-Unionism. On polling day Mr. Chamberlain did not visit Birmingham, as he was employed in speaking for the Liberal-Unionist candidate at Stratford, but he was returned by a large majority (4,278) and his re-election on accepting office was unopposed.

The Liberal-Unionists were now to take their share in the work of administration; the possibilities of maintaining harmonious relations between the two sections of the Unionist Party had been sufficiently demonstrated during the two previous administrations, throughout the first of which the Liberal-Unionists had refrained from accepting office. The Conservatives knew that Home Rule must have passed had it not been for the sacrifices made by their allies in 1886, who from that time had found themselves obliged to postpone, though most unwillingly, great measures of social reform for the still greater one of Union, and who discovered,

much to their satisfaction, that the Conservative party was now ready to go with them far along the paths of social progress.

In the new administration the Liberal-Unionists were substantially represented. Mr. Jesse Collings became Parliamentary Secretary to the Home Office; Mr. Powell Williams, another member for Birmingham, Financial Secretary to the War Office; and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Civil Lord of the Admiralty. These appointments were not made without unfriendly criticism; but it was pointed out that not only was each man fitted for his post, but the proportion of posts in the new administration given to the Liberal-Unionists was in proportion to their strength in the House, and therefore to the opinion they represented in the country.

The Ministerial posts previously held by Mr. Chamberlain, as President of the Board of Trade and of the Local Government Board, were now occupied by Mr. Ritchie and Mr. Chaplin respectively, and Sir Matthew White Ridley was at the Home Office. Thus none of those positions in the Cabinet which afford special facilities for introducing measures of social reform were chosen by Mr. Chamberlain, and to the surprise of many he accepted the post of Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Those who expected that as Colonial Secretary he would no longer concern himself with domestic legislation have been much mistaken. His labours in connection with the Workmen's Compensation Act (introduced by Sir Matthew White Ridley) and the Acquisition of Small Houses Act introduced by himself (to mention only two instances) show that the needs of the working classes still occupied his attention. Yet it has been constantly asserted that since the split, Mr. Chamberlain has practically abandoned home legislation for the development of Imperial concerns. It seems difficult to explain this delusion, unless it is that, to a certain extent, the greater hides the less, and that when the eye is fixed on Imperial interests, it is apt to overlook domestic ones. A

further reason for this mistake may be found in his many-sidedness ; few people keep so many threads in their hands at once as does the Colonial Secretary. Thus his work at the Colonial Office since 1895, especially in connection with Imperial Federation, has somewhat overshadowed in the public mind his efforts for continuous domestic improvement. It is therefore the more noteworthy that, since Mr. Chamberlain left the Liberal party in 1886, two of the greatest legislative benefits received by the working-man have been conferred ; namely Free Education, advocated continuously by him since the days of the National Education League, and given at last by a Conservative Government of which he was a supporter, and the Workmen's Compensation Act, brought in and carried by the Government of which he was a member, with his continued and energetic advocacy.

The liability of the employer with respect to accidents to his workmen and their right to compensation, has long been a fruitful source of legislative activity and contention. Previous Bills had been framed on what may be called a "punish-the-master" principle ; the Workmen's Compensation Act was framed on a "help-the-man" basis instead. It had long been admitted, said Mr. Chamberlain in 1894, that a man injured by the negligence of a fellow-servant was much to be pitied and ought to be compensated. "But one injured in exactly the same way by the 'Act of God'—*i.e.*, by some accident for which no cause can be found—is just as much entitled to sympathy and compassion as the other man." The provision of compensation for accident ought to be a first charge upon trade, and however the disablement occurred the man should receive compensation ; the soldiers of industry must be cared for as well as the soldiers of war.

The Members of the Birmingham Trades Council were invited in this year to a friendly private conference at Highbury, in order that their views as to a practical measure might be learned by Mr. Chamberlain. After a lively

discussion by the Council, punctuated by angry dissent from some members afraid of "truckling" to a statesman with whom they did not altogether agree, the invitation was accepted and the meeting took place, though not at Highbury. The subjects for discussion were an Eight-hours' Day, Compensation for Accidents, Housing of the Poor, Prison Labour, and Alien Pauper Immigration.

Thus it is evident that in 1894 Mr. Chamberlain was still occupying himself with social problems. Speaking in 1897, he analysed the addresses of the Unionist candidates of 1895, and found that the measures promised were, in their order, Old-Age Pensions, Relief of Agriculture, Increase of Defensive Resources, Employers' Liability, Aid to Voluntary Schools.

As to their fulfilment, he pointed out that, by the beginning of 1897, a Commission had been appointed to draw up a practical scheme on Old-Age Pensions, and measures for the Relief of Agriculture and Increase of our Defensive Resources had been passed. Aid to Voluntary Schools (now provided), on account of dissension in the ranks, presented unlooked-for difficulties, but the question of Employers' Liability, he said, was to be dealt with at once.

The Workmen's Compensation Act (of 1897) was in charge of Sir Matthew White Ridley. Previous legislation on this subject and the provisions of Mr. Asquith's Bill (finally withdrawn by the Government on account of an amendment inserted by the House of Lords) were thus described by Mr. Chamberlain in 1894:—

"The present law makes the employer liable for any accident which is caused by his own negligence or the negligence of persons whom he has directly appointed. The Bill of the present Government [Mr. Gladstone's Administration 1894], proposes to carry the liability further, and to make the employer liable for any accident caused by the negligence of the fellow-workman of a workman employed. . . .

"The Bill does not go nearly far enough"—for it provided against injury through negligence, but not through accident

pure and simple. "The great object surely . . . should be that a man who in the course of his employment is injured, or the family of a man who is killed, should receive whatever compensation it is possible to offer by pecuniary means."

This principle was embodied in Sir M. W. Ridley's Bill. The fund for compensation was to be obtained by the masters' insurance against accident, and opposition to the Bill on the part of large employers of labour was considerable. It gave compensation in certain trades for all accidents, and as there is now no occasion to prove negligence, one fruitful source of litigation was removed, though "the limits of application have led to much litigation on points of law." An effort will doubtless be made to extend the provisions of the Act to other trades at present shut out from its benefits.

Mr. Chamberlain spoke constantly on this Bill; and during its passage the *Daily Chronicle* describes him as—

"devilling for Sir M. White Ridley; arbitrating, conciliating, reconciling warring interests, and stamping the whole proceedings in the House with that spirit of clear and precise bargaining which has always been Mr. Chamberlain's note in politics. His peculiar power of abolishing and superseding great dividing issues by suggesting compromise and give-and-take is such, that his ascendancy in the House during these two weeks may be set off against his failure over the South African problem."

This is the criticism of a hostile paper.

A curious comment is also made by the *Saturday Review* on Mr. Chamberlain's activity in connection with this Bill.

"No one has earned much distinction during the session, in domestic legislation, but Mr. Chamberlain. He has increased his reputation, and the success of the Workmen's Compensation Bill must be attributed to him. The House of Commons, which is rather feminine in some of its characteristics, and likes to be ruled by a strong hand, allows him to bully it more than any one else."



Late Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild. Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain. Lady Sophie Palmer. Mr. Austen Chamberlain.  
Provost Brown. Lord Hartington.



*Photo by*

Earl of Camperdown.

Duchess of St. Albans.  
Miss Chamberlain.

Mrs. Chamberlain.

The Late Duke of St. Albans.

*[Draycott.]*

THE MARQUESS OF HARTINGTON AT HIGHBURY.



No "bullying" was needed for the passage of his Bill for the Acquisition of Small Houses; it was **Acquisition of Small Houses, 1899.** conciliatory in tone, and was put forward in a friendly manner. It is founded on a principle of voluntary combination on the part of the tenant, landlord, and municipality; none of them could be compelled to put the Act in motion. The municipality may advance four-fifths of a *maximum* sum of £300 to enable a workman to become the freeholder of his house, but the expenses incurred under this Act may not exceed a sum which would be covered by a rate of a penny in the pound. Up to the present time little use has been made of the Act. By this measure Mr. Chamberlain hoped to secure for workmen better homes, a popular form of thrift, and a larger stake in the country; he also hoped to make them better citizens and occupiers. Arrangements were made for the transference of holdings as cheaply and quickly as possible, in view of the fact that working men have to move about in search of work. The Irish peasant, he said, had long before received aid to enable him to become the owner of his cottage or farm, it was now time the Englishman should have help in that direction.

Mr. Chamberlain's interest in Old-Age Pensions is well **Old-Age Pensions.** known. In 1891 a non-party committee drew up a plan by which it was hoped the problem might be solved, but the only practical method (he said in a debate in the House in 1899) was to deal with the question in sections. Direct contribution to a pension fund ought not to be made compulsory, nor was it fair to give pensions only to those who made this direct contribution, as other forms of thrift might be equivalent to money payments. The great difficulty was that a universal scheme would be too costly and would make no distinction between the thrifty and the improvident; the Poor Law, he thought, must supplement any workable scheme, and to that end the classification of paupers ought to be more systematically carried out. Under our present system the thrifty receive

no more encouragement than the improvident ; they all go to the same poor-house—and get the same out-door treatment.

Mr. Asquith charged the Unionists with not having carried out the promises made by them in 1895, with respect to this great work ; but Mr. Chamberlain replied that the Government were most anxious to do something, if only a satisfactory scheme could be drafted ; indeed he would be content with partial success at first, as any measure must be largely experimental. The Government would support Mr. Holland's Bill on condition that it went to a select committee. Such a committee was nominated in May 1899.

At the Leicester Conference in November 1899, the Liberal-Unionists placed Old-Age Pensions among the first of the measures to be considered by the Government, and had it not been for the cost of the war, something might have been done in this direction.

At any rate such was Mr. Chamberlain's opinion. Speaking in May 1899 to a meeting of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows who were visiting Highbury, he said :—

“It is my hope before many months, and before this Parliament comes to an end, that something may be done in the direction of which I have spoken. . . .

“Rome was not built in a day, and we are not going to have Old-Age Pensions in a week. I have never given up my own faith, my own belief, that the thing is right in itself, that it is necessary and desirable, and that it may be so worked out as to contribute to thrift, not to discourage it. And I believe by the process of exhaustion, by putting aside the plans that are impossible, we are gradually arriving at a plan that is possible.”

To any universal scheme, such as giving five shillings—weekly to every one over 60 years of age, Mr. Chamberlain protested that he would never give his consent ; it would require an expenditure of 34 millions, and an enormous increase in the taxation of all classes, such an increase as the working people would sensibly feel.

"It amounts to one gigantic scheme for everybody, good and bad, thrifty and unthrifty, the waster, the drunkard, and the idler, as well as the industrious. I say I will never lend myself to a proposal of that kind. . . . We want to help the deserving and leave the undeserving to the Poor Law, and we think he is well off then. It is only the deserving man who is entitled to this consideration."

Some rough test of thrift must be applied—*e.g.*, contribution to a Friendly Society. It was to the interest of the Friendly Societies to join in such a scheme, for their proper province was provision for sickness, and as things now were they were practically obliged to consider old-age as sickness, and to provide what was equivalent to a perpetual pension. Thus their resources were liable to be crippled. He ardently wished the Friendly Societies would give the subject more "favourable attention than they had done hitherto."

"I have been called over the coals, because I have not been able to produce a scheme which satisfies everybody. I do not think I ever pretended to the sort of ability which would enable a man to do that."

Mr. Chamberlain, as a member of the Unionist Cabinet which introduced the Land Purchase Bill of 1896, and the Irish Local Government Bill, of 1898, is entitled to his share of any credit due to the Unionists for their Irish legislation. His own programme for Ireland (his substitute for Home Rule) was being steadily worked through, and the measures he had indicated as necessary in 1885 (before Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was introduced) were now filling the Statute Book. There was still much to be done in developing Irish resources, but the two principal items of his programme (of which such development was the third), the Land Purchase Bill and Local Government Bill, have become law.

The Land question having been dealt with in the Land Bill of 1896, the way was cleared for the Irish Local Government Bill of 1898.

Mr. Redmond protested that this Bill merely gave to Ireland rights and privileges long enjoyed by England and

Irish Legisla-  
tion,  
1895—1900.

Scotland, and was in no sense a substitute for Home Rule.

**Irish Local Government Bill, 1898.** That, answered Mr. Balfour, had not been the intention of the Government in bringing in the Bill; it was introduced because the Unionists

had always promised Ireland a liberal measure of Local Government so soon as she was sufficiently ready for it, and because the Bill in itself was desirable. It was an integral part of their policy, and was neither a step towards Home Rule nor a compromise with the Nationalists. Sir William Harcourt agreed that the Bill would not satisfy the Nationalist Party, but at the same time he could not vote for Mr. Redmond's amendment to the address which declared Home Rule to be the most urgent of all subjects of domestic policy. He also said that it was asking "too much" to call upon the Liberal Party to vote for an independent Parliament for Ireland.

**Relief of Distress, 1899.** The Irish Local Government Bill did not complete the benefits conferred by the Unionists on Ireland. Measures were taken to mitigate the distress in the western districts of the island, and the session of 1899 showed a continuance of the efforts of the Government to develop Irish Resources.

**Department of Agriculture.** A great step forward was taken when a Department of Agriculture, making provision for technical instruction, was created. For this purpose Mr. Gerald Balfour, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, brought in a Bill, which provided that the new department should perform all Government functions in connection with Irish agriculture; it passed with comparatively little opposition. Further provision for the Congested Districts Board was also made in this session.

Thus, if Ireland had not received Home Rule, she had received from the Imperial Government some of the measures of Reform she would have demanded from her own Parliament. By Mr. Gladstone's Bill of 1893, the land question must have been left untouched for three years by any Irish Legislative Body, but the Unionists passed a Land



*Photo by]*

*[Maclure, Macdonald, & Co.*

MR. CHAMBERLAIN AS LORD RECTOR OF GLASGOW UNIVERSITY,  
INSTALLED NOVEMBER 3RD, 1897.





Bill in 1896, making considerable grants of money to aid Irish Industries, and it may be doubted whether Ireland would have received more substantial benefits from the Liberal Party. Their enthusiasm for Home Rule appeared in 1899 to have largely abated, for Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, the Leader of the Opposition, said that Mr. Redmond was trying to injure the only party in the kingdom which had supported his cause; the Liberals as practical men must refuse to promise that Home Rule would be their first business when they returned to power; for though they were ready to co-operate with the Nationalists, no formal alliance had ever existed. It is not surprising that Mr. Redmond "thought this statement most unsatisfactory!"

Mr. Chamberlain's contention, that it was possible to do much for Ireland without giving Home Rule, is believed by the Unionists to have been justified, and that, after five years of their administration, Ireland is more prosperous than she would have been with Home Rule and the chances of civil war. They, however, would be the last to assert that all has been done for her that is necessary or desirable, but they still maintain that this can be accomplished without reverting to Mr. Gladstone's Irish Policy.

On October 20th, 1896, Mr. Chamberlain was nominated Lord Rector of Glasgow University, and installed on November 3rd, 1897; he polled 715 votes as against Mr. Birrell's 517, having a majority in each of the four "nations."

Mr. Chamberlain's Glasgow speeches together with his Rectorial address on "Patriotism," might be cited as an epitome of his social, municipal, political and imperial creed. They form a summary of his public life and sentiments. The address on Patriotism was considered one of his finest pronouncements either in writing or speaking. "I should be prouder of that than of almost anything else I had done, if I were Chamberlain," said one of his fellow-citizens. The following short extracts scarcely give a true impression of the force and originality of the address.

"When so much has altered—persons, opinions, and circumstances—I should think it a poor boast that I alone had remained unchanged ; but in view of the confidence that you have now vouchsafed to me, I ask you to believe that, through all the vicissitudes of things, I have constantly sought—it may be with faltering steps and by mistaken roads—the greatness of the Empire and the true welfare of the people at large. . . .

"A vague attachment to the whole human race is a poor substitute for the performance of the duties of a citizen ; and professions of universal philanthropy afford no excuse for neglecting the interest of one's own country. . . .

"I believe that this work (development and colonisation) has specially devolved upon our country,—that it is our interest, our duty, and our national mission to carry it to a successful issue. Is it contended that the weary Titan staggers under the 'too vast orb of his fate,' and that we have not the strength to sustain the burden of Empire? We are richer, more numerous, and in every way more powerful than our ancestors when they laid the foundations of our dominion and encountered in the task a world in arms. We have the firm assurance of the loyalty and affection of the sons of Britain across the sea, and of their readiness to play their part in the common defence.

"We do not lack efficient instruments for our great purpose, and we can still count on the energy and devotion of our countrymen, and on their ability to win the confidence and respect of the people they are sent to govern for their good. On the bleak mountains of the Indian frontier, amidst the sands of the Sudan, in the swamps and forests of Western Africa—wherever the British flag floats—Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Irishmen are to-day fronting every danger and enduring every hardship—living as brave men and dying as heroes, in the faithful performance of duty and the passionate love of their country. They ask from us that their sacrifices shall not be in vain.

"If such is still the spirit of our people why should we shrink from our task, or allow the sceptre of empire to fall from our hands

'Thro' craven fears of being great'?

"I have faith in our race and our nation I believe that,

with all the force and enthusiasm of which Democracy alone is capable, they will complete and maintain that splendid edifice of our greatness, which, commenced under aristocratic auspices, has received in these later times its greatest extension ; and that the fixity of purpose and strength of will which are necessary to this end will be supplied by that National Patriotism which sustains the most strenuous efforts and makes possible the greatest sacrifices."

In proposing the health of the Lord Rector, after this address, the Principal said his position was as difficult as that of an unknown Member, who speaks in the House of Commons after a distinguished statesman and great orator has just concluded his speech.

Mr. Chamberlain replied that the Principal credited the average Member of the House with too much modesty, he was by no means in a state of diffidence and alarm, "when he is following a prominent statesman, on the contrary he is delighted at the opportunity!" In acknowledging this toast, he said :—

"I am glad to think that that great work which has fallen to my hand has happily been hitherto—and I hope may long continue—outside altogether the ordinary lines of party politics. For it is absolutely necessary that those who have to speak for the country should have the confidence of the country, so long as they are entrusted with this duty. I am glad to think that that fact—the fact that this has been so—and that anything in the nature of party attacks has ceased to characterise the treatment of the colonial policy in the House of Commons—has most materially aided the Government in dealing with the very difficult circumstances to which the Principal has referred [the Jameson Raid]."

Mr. Chamberlain was too sanguine in thinking that Colonial policy was henceforth to be free from party attacks, even in the face of a crisis graver than confronted us in 1896. But he was right in anticipating the growing bond of union between ourselves and the Colonies.

“There are signs which I think most satisfactory that a demand for closer union will come to us from the Colonies. The exact form it will take is not now (1897) of so much importance ; but I believe that the question of a really united Empire is becoming a question of practical politics.”

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### *SOUTH AFRICA: THE RAID AND THE INQUIRY*

- I. AFTER THE LONDON CONVENTION—REVIEW OF OUTLANDERS' POSITION—ORIGIN OF RAID MOVEMENT—MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND THE RAIDERS—KRUGER'S "MAGNANIMITY."
- II. AFTER THE RAID—ADDRESS TO CONSTITUENTS—MEETING OF PARLIAMENT, 1896—ASKS FOR INQUIRY—TRIAL OF RAIDERS—THE INQUIRY—THE COMPANY AND THE COLONIAL OFFICE—REPORT OF COMMISSION OF INQUIRY—DEBATE IN THE HOUSE, JULY 1897—ATTEMPT TO REOPEN THE INQUIRY FEBRUARY, 1900—CONSEQUENCES OF THE RAID.

THE Jameson Raid was not an isolated filibustering incident; it was the ill-considered, ill-timed, illegal conclusion of a plan for securing the reformation and, if need be, the destruction of a Government which, though it had so far ignored the remonstrances, petitions, and claims of the powerful and alien trading community over which it was set, was still at peace with Great Britain.

The non-Dutch inhabitants of the Transvaal, called Outlanders (who in 1896 outnumbered the Boers by two to one), had come into the country after the discovery of the gold mines in 1885. Only a year had elapsed since, in 1884, the Convention of London had given to the Transvaal Republic freedom in its internal affairs, yet it looked as though the disorder and financial dishonour of the years before the annexation were to be repeated at once. The treasury was empty and the Boers themselves would not fill it; only with difficulty was the scanty revenue of £177,000 collected. When in England, in 1884, President Kruger, anxious to make a good im-

After the  
London  
Convention.

pression and in return for financial assistance of which he was at the moment badly in need, had published an invitation in the London papers, welcoming all comers who wished to settle in the Transvaal. His invitation was accepted as soon as the gold mines were discovered, and his financial perplexities bade fair to disappear. But their very solution brought others in their train. The Outlanders wanted some consideration in return for paying Boer bills.

Their demands were moderate; they only asked that which both the Conventions had promised them—"liberty to reside in the country with enjoyment of all civil rights, and protection for their persons and property." It had also been stipulated that they were not to be "subject to any taxes, general or local, other than those which are or may be imposed upon citizens of the Republic."

Both these promises were broken, and when in August, 1895, the Outlanders presented a petition asking for the franchise, signed by thirty-four thousand of their number, it was received in the Raad with derisive laughter; the signing of the petition was said to be a proof that they were not "law-abiding persons," and it would be therefore contrary to Republican principles to grant them the franchise. Another member advised them to "come and fight for it."

"The Transvaal Government," says M. de Naville,<sup>1</sup> a distinguished Swiss scholar, "filled its treasury with enormous sums levied almost entirely on the foreigners, and for the employment of which they had to render no account." The revenue, only £177,000 in 1885, was in 1897 over £4,400,000, and of this "nearly one million (that is, £40 for every adult Boer, for it goes without saying that in all this the Outlanders have no share) is paid away in salaries and emoluments."

In addition "*other expenses*" swallowed up £660,000, providing a larger sum for "secret service" than England

<sup>1</sup> "The Transvaal Question from a Foreign Point of View," Translated from the French of Edward Naville (Blackwood),

pays. What do a "simple pastoral people," want with £200,000 for secret service funds? . . .

"Wearied with useless efforts, in 1892 the Outlanders formed an association under the name of the 'National Union' whose object was to obtain by constitutional means equal rights for all citizens and the redress of their grievances. From the very first Kruger showed himself hostile to this association, and replied by trying to force the foreigners into military service. . . . Seeing they could effect nothing from the Raad, the League organised a revolutionary movement of emancipation, for which they endeavoured to procure the necessary arms."

This movement was joined by the best class of Afrikaners, who were angry at the introduction of Hollanders into the Administration of the Republic. The Outlanders (not all of whom were English) "resolved to fight under the Transvaal flag. Their object was to oust Kruger and his oligarchy, and to proclaim a more liberal constitution."

There can be no doubt as to the position of the disputants at this time. Rightly or wrongly, the Outlanders complained; rightly or wrongly the Boers refused to alter that which was complained of. The result was a deadlock; the only possible ending, submission or revolt of the governed on the one side, continuance or reform of the obnoxious Government on the other. The Outlanders "plumped" for reform somehow to be accomplished; the Boers, for submission somehow to be extorted.

The Jameson Raid rendered the whole movement of the National Union futile. Their plan was to seize Pretoria and the arsenal, and depose President Kruger. Dr. Jameson, administrator of Mashonaland (Rhodesia), was if necessary to furnish help, by bringing in a number of the British South African Police, principally to protect the unarmed residents of Johannesburg, including many women and children. His help was "emergency help" and he was not to start until he received orders, when a letter, with which he was already furnished, would authorise him to interfere.

The original draft of the letter prepared by the reformers (says Mr. Fitzpatrick in *The Transvaal From Within*), said,

"It is under these circumstances that we feel constrained to call upon you to come to our aid—should a disturbance arise here. The circumstances are so extreme, etc. . . ."

In this letter as published by the *Times* the sense was altered by the alteration of the pause—thus:—

"It is under these circumstances that we feel constrained to call upon you to come to our aid. Should a disturbance arise here, the circumstances are so extreme, etc. . . ."

In the first case the call to aid was conditional: in the second it was absolute. The Outlanders' grievances may have justified the efforts of the National Union for reform from within, but nothing could justify the inroad of irresponsible outsiders.

On New Year's Eve 1895, Mr. Chamberlain unexpectedly left Birmingham by the midnight mail for London. **Mr. Chamberlain and the Raiders.** A telegram had been received at the Colonial Office, saying that Dr. Jameson with a force of South African Police, had crossed the border of the Transvaal and was marching on either Pretoria or Johannesburg. On New Year's Day 1896, all London read the news, and the immense excitement deepened when it was known that Mr. Chamberlain had telegraphed peremptory instructions to Sir Hercules Robinson (the British High Commissioner in South Africa) to stop Jameson and turn him back. He had started, not only without orders, but against them, as conveyed in the messages and letters sent to him by the Reform Committee and by Rhodes himself. The "emergency" had not arisen, and Jameson's disregard of orders revealed and nullified all the Reform Committee's plans. The Raiders were thereby exposed to ignominious defeat, and to save their lives the Outlanders were disarmed and were in worse case than before. The Raid was a gigantic blunder and a political crime.





### THE PARLIAMENTARY "TOURNAMENT."

Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Gladstone. From a *Punch* cartoon, June 10th, 1893,  
during the debate on the second Home Rule Bill.



Mr. Chamberlain's message reached Jameson, as that of the Reform Committee in Johannesburg had already done, for reasons which appeared to him at the time sufficient. Dr. Jameson ignored both messages. At Krugersdorp he and his men, exhausted by fighting and want of food, were surrounded and capitulated to Commandant Cronje, on condition that their lives should be spared. They were taken to Pretoria and lodged in gaol.

Acting on Mr. Chamberlain's instructions, Sir Hercules Robinson immediately went to Pretoria to arrange, if possible, that the Raiders should be handed over to the British Government. Incredible and incomprehensible as it seems, he listened to the advice of Sir Jacobus de Wet and did not visit the imprisoned Englishmen. He had therefore no means of ascertaining the events which immediately preceded and followed their capture, save from the Boers. He did not therefore know of the condition on which they surrendered, or he would not have gone to Johannesburg and implored the people to lay down their arms to save Jameson's life. Cronje did not make known the conditions of surrender, and is said to have repudiated them as soon as his foes were disarmed. It cannot be forgotten that, during the first Boer war (1881), he continued the bombardment of Potchefstroom after an armistice had been concluded; he simply concealed the news till the town capitulated.

And though Cronje had promised the Raiders their lives, the Johannesburgers did not know it; the English public did not know it; the Colonial Office did not know it; the High Commissioner was kept in ignorance of it—but President Kruger did know it. His consummate deceit cost Johannesburg dear, even while his magnanimity in thus sparing the invaders taken in arms, was in every one's mouth. It was a magnanimity which cost little or nothing, and which paid him well; it was on a par with the claim for "moral and intellectual damages" sent in to the British Government. The Bill for magnanimity was not sent in, but the Outlanders

paid it to the uttermost farthing. Kruger's first business was to disarm them. Had he shot "Dr. Jim," South Africa might have been in a blaze, and the outraged Outlanders might have taken the law into their own hands; if so, the Imperial Government must have hesitated before sending English troops to restore order and perhaps fire on Englishmen. Kruger made an excellent bargain; the lives of Jameson and his men were of no good to him; but the reputation for magnanimity was worth something, the Outlanders' arms were worth a good deal, the fines he intended to inflict were worth much more.

The farce was played out to the end. The Reform Committee were arrested on a charge of high treason; four of them pleaded guilty and were sentenced to death, but by a further exercise of magnanimity they were reprieved, with sentences of fine and banishment.

**Trial of the  
Reform  
Committee.**

From the four leaders Kruger received £100,000, and £90,000 from forty-five of the rank and file—£190,000, exclusive of the indemnity to be paid by Great Britain for the material damage inflicted by the Raid. This being comparatively small (£667,938 3s. 3d.), a postscript demanding "moral and intellectual damages" (£1,000,000) was added. It has not yet been paid.

Much which then passed comparatively unnoticed, in the light of recent events is of sinister significance. President Steyn persuaded Kruger not to accept the Colonial Office invitation to come to England to discuss the differences between the Transvaal Republic and Great Britain, and a new offensive and defensive alliance was immediately concluded between the Orange Free State and the Republic. A special cable from Pretoria (January 11th) said: "The release of Jameson is dependent on the abrogation of the London Convention." A telegram from Berlin of the same date affirmed that President Kruger was "strongly disposed to appeal to the European Powers to support him in his contention."

Such support appeared by no means impossible, for it

was rightly considered that the telegram to President Kruger sent by the German Emperor immediately after the Raid, conveyed a thinly veiled offer of assistance should Kruger appeal for it, and it is certain that his subsequent attitude both toward Germany and England was based on this assumption.

On the day on which the abrogation of the Convention of London was suggested, Mr. Chamberlain telegraphed to Mr. Hofmeyer that:—

“Steps should be taken to make it impossible for such attempts to be planned or executed in future. My present object is to prevent the further embitterment of the relations between Dutch and English, which might result from extreme measures against either Johannesburg or the prisoners.”

On January 17th, 1896, Mr. Chamberlain returned to Highbury for a short rest before the opening of **After the Raid.** Parliament. Immense crowds assembled in and round the station cheering him heartily. “Well done, Joe!” “Bravo, Chamberlain!” they shouted, and the Birmingham Volunteers sent a telegram: “Birmingham Volunteers wish to share in England’s praises.” Mr. Chamberlain replied in a few words thanking them for their support; he hoped good would come out of the evil, for nothing was now more sure than that in a time of national difficulty party distinctions would vanish and all England give help in the national interests.

A few days later, in speaking to his constituents, he alluded to the splendid outburst of loyalty from **Address to Constituents, January 27th, 1896.** Canada and Australia; for these colonies, roused by the German Emperor’s telegram of congratulation to President Kruger, had formally offered their help to the Mother Country. This offer had “left behind the determination to increase our resources of defence and the assurance of the affection and loyalty of our children beyond the seas.”

He then stated the problem which had to be solved in South Africa, the anomaly which had to be removed.

"I have never denied that there is just cause for discontent in the Transvaal Republic. The majority of the population pay nine-tenths of the taxation and have no share whatever in governing the country. This is an anomaly which does not exist in any other civilised community, and one which wise and prudent statesmanship would remove. I believe it can be removed without danger to the independence of the Republic. I believe that, until it is removed, you have no guarantee against future internal disturbances.

"That is the problem which is before President Kruger and which has for England, as the paramount power in South Africa, the deepest possible interest. It is a subject which still engages my anxious consideration and I hope—I think not without reason—that this problem will be satisfactorily solved."

But President Kruger would not admit that such a solution was possible; it is now clear that he did not intend to remove the anomaly, and in answer to the despatch (sent by Mr. Chamberlain on February 4th), pointing out the grievances which were the primary cause of the Raid, and calling attention to breaches of the Convention, he replied that such matters belonged to the internal affairs of the Republic which could not be touched by England, and that he did not admit that the Johannesburgers had any grievances.

"We intend," said Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at the annual South African dinner, "strictly to fulfil our obligations. We intend also to maintain our legal rights. . . ."

Mr. Chamberlain's attitude throughout this time was firm and decided though his position was beset with difficulties. He was, as he said, immediately obliged to act on his own responsibility, in circumstances of the gravest peril, where a single false step would have compromised the honour of Great Britain, or plunged her into a war with the Transvaal and

possibly with Germany. Also he was "urged to hold his hand," but feeling what was due from him as a representative of the Crown, he said, "I did what I did."

When Parliament met he explained the steps taken by the Colonial Office in the suppression of the Raid, and demanded a full inquiry into its origin and the circumstances under which it was carried out, as soon as the trial of Jameson and his officers should be concluded. This dragged on until July, when a sentence of fifteen months' imprisonment was pronounced on "Dr. Jim"; the severest punishment of his officers was the loss of their commissions.

Meeting of  
Parliament,  
February  
1896.

"The moment the inquiry was over," said Mr. Chamberlain, "I came [to the House] and proposed a committee. . . . It was appointed at the end of 1896, too late to get to work, and in 1897 it was reappointed, again at my instigation, and proceeded to work. . . . Having always in view the desirability of avoiding anything in the nature of party conflict, I practically accepted every suggestion made by the right hon. gentleman opposite [Sir W. Harcourt] for the conduct of the proceedings. . . . It is perfectly well known to the House that I wanted a judicial commission, similar to that which tried the case against Mr. Parnell, and it was only because the Opposition objected to a judicial committee that the Parliamentary Committee was appointed. I regret very much the decision arrived at. I did everything I could to avoid sitting on the Committee" . . . [knowing that the conduct of the Colonial Office must come under inquiry.]

The inquiry was held during the session of 1897. It was clearly to the advantage of the Raiders—who included Directors of the Chartered Company, which was at that time negotiating with the Colonial Office—that it should be supposed to favour their plan. But Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Selborne, who were both present at every conference with the Chartered Company's representatives, swore at the inquiry that the subject was not mentioned before them, and that they had no previous knowledge of

The Inquiry,  
1897.

the Raid nor of the intentions of the Reform Committee of Johannesburg.

At the time the plan of the Raid was being formed, Mr. Hawkesley, solicitor to the Chartered Company, was in constant communication with the Colonial Office, being engaged in negotiations for a strip of land belonging to Khama and other Bechuana chieftains, which the Company wanted for the Cape-Rhodesia railway, and it was this strip of land which was to be used as the "jumping-off ground" for the Raid. The Company may be said to have had, therefore, two objects in view throughout the negotiations, the Colonial Office only knew of one, namely, the acquisition of land for the railway. It was during these negotiations that the telegrams were sent from the representatives of the Chartered Company to their Directors—telegrams which played so great a part in the inquiry, and in the subsequent attacks on the Colonial Secretary for his supposed complicity in the Raid.

The Report was presented by the Commission of Inquiry in July 1897. The Committee found that neither **Presentation of Report, July 1897.** the Colonial Office nor the Colonial Secretary was in any way privy to, or implicated in, the Raid, and Sir Hercules Robinson was exonerated from all knowledge of it, though his name had been used by Mr. Rhodes in a way which would imply that his, the High Commissioner's, consent would eventually be given; but Sir Graham Bower and Mr. Newton were censured for concealing their knowledge from Sir Hercules. Mr. Rhodes (as late Prime Minister of the Colony) was severely and unanimously condemned for abusing his position, and for exercising his influence on younger and less influential men to persuade them to join the conspiracy; strong recommendations were made that the Chartered Company's Powers should be curtailed and its organisation reconsidered and revised. This report was signed by Mr. Chamberlain, showing that he concurred in the censure of Mr. Rhodes.

A minority Report drawn up by Mr. Labouchere called



for the punishment of Mr. Rhodes and for a more searching inquiry.

A debate took place in the House on the presentation of the Report (July 26th), in which it was said that Mr. Hawkesley had been consulted as to the composition of the Committee, and had been in communication, more or less frequently, with certain members of it during the proceedings; also that Lord Grey did not give evidence, and that Mr. Rhodes returned to Africa before the inquiry was ended and could not be re-examined or called upon to produce certain letters and telegrams, without which the inquiry could not be considered complete.

In reply, it was pointed out that as all sections of the House must be represented on a Parliamentary Committee, and as Mr. Labouchere, the Company's bitterest opponent, was already appointed, the solicitor to the Company was asked which Member of the House was favourable to his clients. The explanation of the missing telegrams was simple. The telegraph company only keep messages for six months, and a portion of the documents in question was already destroyed. Mr. Rhodes only had copies, which, when he returned to England for the inquiry, he brought with him and submitted to Mr. Chamberlain for perusal, who returned them saying that so far as he was concerned (and particularly if their production would tend to exonerate the officers who joined in the Raid), they could be produced. But, acting on instructions from Mr. Rhodes, Mr. Hawkesley refused to produce them when called for, and by that time Mr. Rhodes had returned to the Cape, and both the Parliamentary Session and the inquiry were about to end. The Commission therefore resolved to report immediately to the House rather than postpone judgment to another session. They recorded their opinion that :—

“ Mr. Rhodes' refusal to produce the telegrams leads to the conclusion that he is aware that any statements contained in them, purporting to implicate the Colonial Office, were

Debate in  
the House,  
July 26th,  
1887.

unfounded and the use made of them in support of his acts in South Africa was not justified, though it is clear from the evidence of Mr. Hawkesley and his letter of February 5th, that the telegrams conveyed the impression that Mr. Rhodes' action was known and approved of at the Colonial Office."

When Mr. Rhodes found that Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Selborne swore that nothing suggesting the Raid was brought to their minds by the men who sent the telegrams, it was natural he should regret their being sent. He himself was not in England when they were passing, and he knew that Dr. Harris and Miss Flora Shaw (who sent one message in which Mr. Chamberlain was said to be "safe"), together with other witnesses, had exonerated the Colonial Office from all complicity.

As a speaker in the debate in the House said, the

"telegrams were sent from implicated parties in England to implicated parties in South Africa and the Colonial Office had no cognisance of them at the time. What then could be their value for implicating the Colonial Office? It would have been impossible to condemn any third person on them."

But Mr. Chamberlain's whole life and character should, in the eyes of his enemies, at least, be a sufficient answer to this charge. To implicate himself in such a scheme as the Raid was a folly from which the "diabolical cleverness" with which he has been credited would have saved him. He stood to lose everything, to gain nothing by the Raid. If he had approved of the Raid he would have justified before all Europe, would have found convincing arguments in its favour, would if necessary have staked his political reputation on it. He would have been neither such a fool as to disown the movement when Jameson had barely started, nor such a knave as to procure the trial and imprisonment of men whom he had aided and abetted; for the particular form of villainy with which the Colonial Secretary's bitterest enemies credited him, is certainly not cowardice, or a disinclination "to face the music." The chief secret of the

hatred some men feel for him is, that he cares so little for their particular music, and is willing to face anything in support of his opinions.

On February 6th, 1900, a motion to reopen the inquiry was supported by Sir W. Harcourt, Mr. Labouchere, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and Mr. Blake, a Nationalist, all of whom sat on the Commission of Inquiry in 1897. Sir William Harcourt asserted his conviction of Mr. Chamberlain's innocence with much warmth, but wished further punishment for Mr. Rhodes. The Opposition as a whole took care to disown their belief in the complicity of the Colonial Secretary but said, in effect, that the case looked so black that they hoped Mr. Chamberlain would kindly allow himself to be whitewashed. Mr. Chamberlain refused emphatically, indignantly, finally.

A fresh access of spitefulness on the part of certain people and certain journals intent on proving the complicity of the Colonial Office in the Raid, said Mr. Chamberlain, did not come under the head of fresh information which alone would justify reopening this inquiry. His speech in 1897 acquitting Mr. Rhodes of a slur on his "personal honour" was made a few days only after the Report had been presented to the House—if that constituted a reason for a fresh inquiry, why was it not asked for when the speech was made? On that occasion Mr. Labouchere had demanded that Mr. Rhodes should be deprived of his Privy Councillorship and prosecuted; he accused him (without being able to prove his accusations) of having engaged in the Raid for pecuniary reasons, anticipating he would make a "good thing" out of it. The Report condemned Mr. Rhodes in the strongest way, and Mr. Chamberlain reminded the House that he had signed the report and—

agreed substantially with it. But he felt convinced that while Mr. Rhodes's fault was as great a fault as a politician and a statesman could possibly commit, there was nothing which affected Mr. Rhodes's personal character as a man of honour. His deception was part of the original offence;

when a man went into a revolution he could not proclaim his intentions from the housetops. It was a gigantic mistake. As to punishment—could any one say Mr. Rhodes had not been punished? He had lost his post as Premier, as Manager of the Company which he had founded, and in which he was the moving spirit [he afterwards resigned his directorship]; he had lost his influence, his reputation as a politician, and the opportunity of doing great services to the cause of Federation in South Africa; this was an immense punishment for a man like Mr. Rhodes. It was ridiculous to say he had not been punished; if he was to suffer further—on the ground that he was a rich man—there were many on both sides of the House, who would have to suffer with him.

As to depriving him of his rank as Privy Councillor, Mr. Chamberlain uttered a note of warning. "What could be the opinion of South Africa, in its present state of discontent, if the Government deprived Mr. Rhodes of an honour, conferred for services more warmly recognised in South Africa than here? . . ."

"No one knows how careful the Government have to be to carry the majority in South Africa with them."

After referring to this speech, Mr. Chamberlain added :

"While I condemned Mr. Rhodes as strongly as anybody else, for the offences which he had committed, I absolved him absolutely of the offence he had not committed, which, if proved, would have affected his personal honour."

"The distinction is just," said the *Times*, "but it cannot modify the general conviction that the Colonial Secretary's testimony to Mr. Rhodes' honour after the Report was not happily worded." Mr. Chamberlain himself speaks of the "feeling of indignation provoked in me by these most unjust, most unworthy charges," which was doubtless responsible for the particular expression to which exception has been taken.

It was intended by this debate to discredit the Colonial Secretary in the eyes of those who considered him responsible, more than any other man, for the Transvaal war.

Stolen letters, supposed to incriminate the Colonial Office, had been hawked about London, and refused by every respectable newspaper there. At last they were disposed of to Dr. Leyds and appeared in the *Indépendance Belge*.

"Dr. Leyds," said Mr. Chamberlain with profound contempt, "never made a worse bargain in his life than when he paid £100 for that rubbish. There is nothing in these documents, assuming them to be genuine—and I do assume them to be genuine—that from first to last was not known to the Committee and to everybody at the time the Committee sat."

He concluded, amidst continued and sympathetic cheers :

"The honourable gentlemen [opposite] ask for an inquiry—they do not want an inquiry—they want an execution. As long as there is a verdict of acquittal they will go on asking for inquiries. What they want to do, is to discredit the Minister, whom at the present time they charge unjustly with being in a special sense responsible for this war—and whom they desire—no doubt for good reasons—to exclude from any part in the settlement which is to follow. Let them do their worst. I am perfectly ready to rely on the good sense and generosity of this House and of my countrymen outside, and I venture to say that this attack, like all the attacks which have preceded it, will recoil upon the shoulders of those who have made it."

Mr. Chamberlain might on this occasion have quoted Canning's lines on Pitt (which he made use of in his Leicestershire speech in the Autumn of 1899).

"Proceed—be more opprobrious, if you can ;  
Proceed—be more abusive every hour :  
To be more stupid is beyond your power."

Mr. Balfour concluded the debate with a forcible defence of his colleague ; he spoke as one who had not sat on the Commission and could judge therefore of its work impar-

tially. With respect to the personal attack on the Colonial Secretary he said :—

“I do not think my right honourable friend need have anything to fear from it. In my opinion those who have turned this weapon against him have misunderstood the temper of the people of this country. If there is anything calculated to turn an enemy into a friend, to turn a cool observer into an ardent supporter, to make an ardent supporter even more firm in his adherence to any statesman, it is the feeling that that statesman is being unfairly attacked, that his political enemies are taking advantage of the situation to stab him in the back. If I had a good wish to give my right honourable friend, it is that he may have many times to undergo such attacks as to-night. But I can assure him there is nothing which will more secure his position in the eyes of his friends, followers, and supporters, than the consciousness that he has been made the victim of such calumnious assaults, as he has been made the victim of on the present occasion.”

The Unionists made the occasion one of strong demonstrations of support and approval of Mr. Chamberlain and of the Colonial Office, and the majority against the motion was one hundred and thirty-four.

The difficulties created by the Raid were not concerned chiefly with the Raiders—it was comparatively easy to deal with them. The relations between Great Britain and South Africa were affected disastrously in two directions. 1. The position of the Outlanders was made infinitely more difficult, their grievances became greater and their chance of redress smaller than before. 2. The Colonial Office was now hampered in its dealings with the South African Republic and unable to help the Outlanders as effectively as it might have otherwise done.



### THE STORMY PETREL!

From a *Punch* cartoon, August 12th, 1893, during a debate on the second Home Rule Bill.  
By kind permission of the Proprietors of *Punch*.





## CHAPTER XXIX

### *THE COLONIAL SECRETARY AND THE TRANSVAAL CRISIS*

(1896—1899)

- I. FROM THE RAID TO THE CONFERENCE :—DISPUTE ON THE ALIEN IMMIGRATION ACT—JULY—JANUARY—APPOINTMENT OF SIR A. MILNER—MARCH 1897—INVESTIGATION OF THE OUTLANDERS' GRIEVANCES—BOER AND BRITON—THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS—MURDER OF EDGAR—OUTLANDERS' PETITION—SIR A. MILNER'S FAMOUS DESPATCH—THE COLONIAL DUTCH—FURTHER REPUDIATION OF SUZERAINTY—BLOEMFONTEIN CONFERENCE, MAY 31ST—JUNE 6TH, 1899—KRUGER DEMANDS ARBITRATION—FAILURE OF CONFERENCE.
- II. FROM THE CONFERENCE TO THE ULTIMATUM :—DEBATE IN THE HOUSE, JULY 1899—CLOSE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS—HIGHBURY SPEECH, AUGUST 26TH—"DESPATCH A." AUGUST 28TH—BOER REPLY—"DESPATCH B." SEPTEMBER 8TH—BOER REPLY—"DESPATCH C." SEPTEMBER 22ND—BOER REPLY—THE ULTIMATUM—MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S POLICY THROUGHOUT—IMPORTANCE OF SUZERAINTY—KRUGER'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WAR—THE COLONIES AND THE EMPIRE—A UNITED CABINET.

THIS period in Mr. Chamberlain's life divides itself into two parts—I. from the Raid to the Bloemfontein Conference; II. from the Conference to the Ultimatum.

In July 1896, the Transvaal Republic passed a law to enable the President to expel "dangerous aliens" after fourteen days' notice—a law which was in direct contravention of those articles of the Conventions which guaranteed rights of residence to Outlanders. For if President Kruger had the power to expel all whom he

I. From the  
Raid to the  
Conference.

considered dangerous to peace and order he would have power to expel practically all the Outlanders, whom as a body he considered to come under this heading. This would simply cancel the aliens' right to live and trade in the Transvaal.

The Alien Immigration Act, introduced to the Volksraad in July (1896), became law in October, and came into force in January 1897, in spite of continued remonstrances from the Colonial Office. In answer to a further protest in December (1896), President Kruger replied (January 17th, 1897) that his Government saw no objection to the Bill and intended to enforce it.

In March Mr. Chamberlain sent a further remonstrance, pointing out at the same time other infringements of the Convention. In May the Transvaal Government replied with a long despatch in defence of the Alien Immigration Act (which was at length repealed), preferring a demand for arbitration and quoting "international law as applied to treaties between Independent Powers."<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is clear that by means of the Alien Immigration Act of 1896-7, President Kruger raised the question of the suzerainty and coupled with it a demand for arbitration which, if complied with, would secure the practical, if not the formal, abrogation of the suzerainty claim.

This despatch had not been received by Mr. Chamberlain when, in March, Sir Alfred Milner was entertained at a farewell dinner, on his appointment as High Commissioner for South Africa. The dinner was non-political and representative. Mr. Asquith presided, and proposed the health of Sir A. Milner, and Mr. Chamberlain proposed Mr. Asquith's health. Sir W. Harcourt, Lord Rosebery, and many prominent Liberals,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Chamberlain's reply to this despatch concluded thus :—"Under the Convention, Her Majesty holds towards the South African Republic the relation of Suzerain, who has accorded to the people of that Republic self-government upon certain conditions, and it would be incompatible with that position to submit to arbitration the construction of the conditions on which she accorded self-government to the Republic."

unable to be present, sent their congratulations to the new High Commissioner and Governor of Cape Colony.

While admitting that he had a very difficult task before him, Mr. Chamberlain said :—

“I am sanguine enough to believe that the problem before us is not an insoluble problem. For what is it? It is to reconcile and to persuade to live together in peace and good will, two races whose common interests are immeasurably greater than any difference which may unfortunately exist.”

He hoped that “the Government of the Transvaal would come to see that it is its duty to fulfil to the letter the obligations it has voluntarily assumed in connection with the Convention of London. . . .

“We shall,” he declared, amidst loud cheers from Liberals and Unionists alike, “always maintain our position as Paramount Power in South Africa.”

Suggestions had recently been made that eminent persons in South Africa were hoping for an independent Federation of States in which Dutch influence would be paramount, a Federation which might look for support to the Continent of Europe.

“Such an aspiration is incompatible with the highest British interests; it is incompatible with our position at the Cape itself . . . it is an aspiration which cannot be accepted by the people of this country, and until it is frankly abandoned, there cannot be a satisfactory and final settlement. But short of this we are ready now and at all times, to give the fullest and most favourable consideration to the wishes and sentiments, and even to the prejudices, of all parties in South Africa, and to cooperate with them in all measures for the good of the whole community.”

Thus, in the spring of 1897 the position of affairs was that, at home, the Raiders were serving their sentences of imprisonment, and the Commission of Inquiry into the Raid was sitting; in South Africa, Sir Alfred Milner was investigating into the Outlanders' grievances, and President Kruger had just formulated his claim to speak for an “Independent Power,” had demanded arbitration, and had refused to admit that the Outlanders had any grievances.

Sir Alfred Milner's duties were not confined to those of the Governor of Cape Colony. As High Commissioner of the whole of our vast territory in South Africa, he was the guardian of the rights of all her Majesty's subjects, whether black or white. To him the native employed by the Chartered Company, the coolie in Durban, the English farmer on the veldt, the Scottish trader in Rhodesia, the Welsh miner in Johannesburg, the Dutch merchant of Capetown, could appeal. His immediate and most pressing duty on his appointment was to find out the truth concerning the alleged grievances of her Majesty's subjects in the Transvaal. Whether, as had been said by some people, there were practically none, or whether they had been greatly exaggerated, and were only such as aliens in any other country would have to submit to, were points upon which Mr. Chamberlain was bound to satisfy himself; and by means of the searching investigations pursued by the High Commissioner throughout 1897, and the early part of 1898, little doubt was left in his mind, or in that of the Colonial Secretary, as to the reality of the wrongs which many thousands of Her Majesty's subjects in the Transvaal were suffering. By all the rules of justice they should have received the same treatment as Her Majesty's Dutch subjects at the Cape enjoyed; and possibly if their treatment had been altered to correspond with that accorded by President Kruger to the English in the Transvaal, we should have heard less of "alleged or exaggerated grievances," and the Afrikaner Bond would have learned from practical experience where the Outlanders' shoe pinched. Reciprocity sometimes teaches a valuable lesson.

Contrast for a moment the lot of a Dutchman at the Cape with that of an Englishman in the Transvaal. The Dutchman speaks his own language, has it taught to his children at school, hears it spoken in the law courts and in Parliament. He can join the volunteers, become a magistrate, a member of the Corporation or of Parliament, can control his own

Sir A.  
Milner's  
Duties.

The Dutch-  
man at the  
Cape, and  
the English-  
man in the  
Transvaal.

taxation, remonstrate against injustice, hold public meetings, govern the police, bear arms—can, in fact, do everything that a free-born Briton can. And all these privileges, alien and Outlander as he is at first, may become his at the end of two years by naturalisation. But the Englishman at Johannesburg obtained only a limited measure of enfranchisement after nearly fourteen years' residence in the Transvaal; during five of them, having forsworn all allegiance to his last sovereign, was not admitted to any privilege under his new one, though he could be called upon to fight for him. Until he become a naturalised Boer, he may not bear arms to defend his wife or family from outrage, his property or his person from robbery. His children must be taught Dutch by Dutch teachers in a Dutch School. He must conduct his case in the courts in Dutch; the laws by which he is governed and which he has no voice in making, are in Dutch, framed by Dutchmen; his contracts must be drawn up in Dutch; he is tried and sentenced in Dutch, the police who arrest him are controlled by the Dutch. For all these privileges the Englishman paid heavily; he paid, a sum estimated as equivalent to £40 per male Dutchman (throughout the whole Republic) in salaries to the Dutch officials who governed him; but he could not control the spending of a farthing of the money, and if twice the sum were levied he would have no alternative but to pay or to leave the country.

Grievances consequent on the treatment of the natives, and the restrictions on trade are not here entered upon; but the limitations on the freedom of the individual and the insecurity of his life under such rule were illustrated in a sinister manner by the murder of the Englishman Edgar. And since this crime led to the petition which evoked the intervention of the Imperial Government, it is worth while to state plainly what then occurred.

Thomas Edgar,<sup>1</sup> a resident of Johannesburg, an English

<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. Fitzpatrick's account in "The Transvaal From Within."

subject returning home on Christmas Eve 1898, was insulted by a Boer, whom he promptly knocked down. He then entered his house which was close by, and remained in the inner room talking to his wife. He was there when the police came to arrest him. After watching him through the window conversing with his wife, four of the police, armed, burst into his house. Coming out into the passage to see what the noise was, he was immediately shot dead by one of them, falling into the arms of Mrs. Edgar, who had followed him. The policeman was bailed for a sum of £200, and an editor who commented severely on bail being accepted and the conduct of the public prosecutor in accepting it, was prosecuted for libel and the policeman was called as a witness.

As soon as the murder became known the Outlanders gathered in the market-place, where a petition, praying Her Majesty for protection of life and property was read. Then, to the number of four or five thousand, they marched to the British Vice-Consulate handed in the petition and quietly dispersed. (This petition owing to some slight irregularity was never forwarded.) A few days later, two of the organisers were arrested on a charge of convening an illegal meeting and sending a petition to the Queen. Bail to the amount of £1000, five times that asked when murder had been committed, was required. The Outlanders immediately called an indignation meeting which was held in the Amphitheatre, on Saturday, January 14th, 1899. From sworn affidavits (afterwards forwarded to Mr. Chamberlain by Sir. A. Milner in April) it was proved that Boer officials engaged bands of Boer workmen, assembled them at the police court and gave them orders to break up the meeting; the orders were obeyed and heads also were broken, greatly terrifying the women present. The Outlanders, then determined on a second petition which in March was forwarded to Her Majesty; it bore twenty-one thousand signatures and was the first direct appeal received by the suzerain power from British subjects in the Transvaal since

Murder of  
Edgar. The  
Outlanders'  
Petition, May  
1889.

1881. On May 28th the Outlanders, to their great joy, were officially informed that "Her Majesty's Government cannot but express their general sympathy with the memorialists and are earnestly desirous of seeing a speedy and substantial change effected in their position."

England herself was now pledged to fight their battles, and the first step taken was the suggestion that President Kruger should be invited to meet Sir A. Milner at Bloemfontein, to discuss matters in dispute between the two Governments. The High Commissioner's own opinions on the subject were embodied in his despatch of May 4th, which caused so great a sensation. It set forth that the failure to redress these grievances was having a disastrous effect on the general sentiments of the natives and of the Outlanders towards England, and, together with the disloyal propaganda among the Dutch of Cape Colony,—of which there was ample proof—constituted a serious menace to British supremacy in South Africa. This reflection on the Cape Dutch provoked a great storm.

"But was it true?" asked Mr. Chamberlain. "If it was true does any one mean to tell me it was dignified or proper, right or wise, to play the part of the ostrich and bury our heads in the sand, and to conceal what must have been, and what is, a most important element in the situation? Clearly it was my duty to publish Sir A. Milner's despatch even if I disagreed with it, but I agreed with every word of it."

The Outlanders' grievances were not the only matters in dispute between this country and the South African Republic. The Alien Immigration Act 1896 before referred to, raised the Suzerainty question, and between 1897 and 1899 President Kruger made several efforts to obtain its abrogation.

In April 1898 Dr. Leyds again repudiated our claim to Dr. Leyds. suzerainty, and asserted the right of the Republic, not only to arbitration generally, but in reference to the interpretation of the Convention itself.

Further  
Repudiation  
of the  
Suzerainty,  
April 1898—  
September  
1899.

A year later, May, 1899, Mr. Reitz, the Secretary of State, went further and boldly said :

" It follows of itself that the now existing right of absolute  
**Mr. Reitz.** self-government of this Republic is not derived from either the Convention of 1881 or that of 1884, but simply and solely follows from *the inherent right of this Republic as a Sovereign International State.*" Sir A. Milner, in a despatch to Mr. Chamberlain commenting on this claim (June 14th, 1899), says that it matters little what Mr. Reitz' arguments are. The importance of the matter "consists in the assertion that the South African Republic is a 'Sovereign International State.' This is . . . in fact in the nature of a defiance of Her Majesty's Government."

As often as this claim was put forward, it was not only disallowed but was flatly contradicted by Mr. Chamberlain ; and it is clear from the consideration of these despatches, that it was not Mr. Chamberlain, but President Kruger, who raised the question and pushed it further and further to the front. In May 1899 it was supposed to be settled, because though invited to discuss at the Conference all important questions, the President did not mention this, the most important of all. But on July 13th, after the Conference was over, Mr. Chamberlain settled the matter, **Mr. Chamberlain in Reply,** once for all as far as he was concerned, by saying **July 1899.** positively : " Her Majesty's Government have no intention of continuing to discuss this question with the Government of the Republic."

So late as September 5th, 1899, it was emphatically declared in the Volksraad that "*the Republic would never accept the supremacy of Great Britain,*" for the Convention of 1884 had declared its independence.

As soon as the Bloemfontein Conference opened, President Kruger was invited to discuss the franchise question ; other matters would then be dealt with. Instead of doing so he raised twelve other points, among them the Dynamite Monopoly, the Raid Indemnity, the Annexation of Swaziland, and, particularly,

**Proceedings  
 at the  
 Bloemfontein  
 Conference,  
 May 31st—  
 June 6th,  
 1899.**



British Interference in the internal affairs of the Republic, and Arbitration. To this, Sir A. Milner replied: "I cannot agree to the basis which appears to have been laid down, that I should buy with something else the just settlement of the Franchise Question." He then proceeded to suggest a five years' franchise scheme simple in its working, designed to provide "immediate and effective representation" for the Outlander population. In his reply, Kruger put these proposals on one side, and substituted a complicated seven years' franchise to be granted "conditionally upon satisfactory settlement of the first-named points." He followed this up by a persistent demand for arbitration.

Kruger's obstinate refusal to discuss the franchise except as a concession to be paid for (chiefly by arbitration), or to give any but an illusory representation was the cause of the failure of the Bloemfontein Conference.

"Your Excellency knows," he said, "what I have said with regard to Swaziland, which I propose should become a portion of my country, and with regard to the Indemnity and Arbitration, and these are all the points of trouble on my side; but, if you do not want to meet me on these points, *then I would have nothing*, if we agree on the Franchise Question. These points must be taken together."

For what purpose did he want arbitration? He betrayed his real aim in the following sentence:—"Regarding disputes with reference to the manner of interpreting documents—such as the Convention—there can be arbitration. . . ."

Sir A. Milner drily remarked: "There are some cases in which Her Majesty's Government will not arbitrate." The interpretation of the Convention (which had been in force fifteen years) was one of them. Moreover, such a proposal had been peremptorily refused eighteen months before in Mr. Chamberlain's despatches. . . . "There are questions which cannot be decided by arbitration,

Kruger tries  
to sell the  
Franchise.

Sir A. Milner  
closes the  
Conference,  
June 6.

questions of fairness, of justice in certain laws and of the administration, whether the administration continues on a good basis. These are not questions which could be subject to arbitration, such as legal questions could be subject to. . . . If any definite proposal should be made by you, it could be submitted to the consideration of Her Majesty's Government," said Sir A. Milner, and therewith closed the Conference, June 6th, 1899.

In his report on the Conference he said: "My contention is that the atmosphere in which that or any other concession to the Government of the South African Republic can be considered, has yet to be created. Redress of the grievances of Her Majesty's subjects in the South African Republic stands at the head of the programme, and nothing else can be considered till that matter is out of the way. President Kruger's Arbitration Scheme is a mere skeleton of a scheme, and leaves so much undefined that I believe it would raise more questions than it solved."

It was by no means impossible to obtain from President Kruger concessions which appeared satisfactory; it was quite another thing to obtain any which were satisfactory, when they were examined in the light of the grievances they were to remove. It was still more difficult to obtain guarantees of good faith, without which such concessions would be useless.

Though the Conference had failed to settle the Outlanders' difficulties, Mr. Chamberlain was still hopeful that peace might be preserved. In a debate in the House (July 28th), he was hopeful, he said for two reasons. First, because in spite of articles in the English press which might have misled him, President Kruger had now come to the conclusion that the Government were in earnest and that they had the people behind them.

Secondly, "it is my absolute conviction that the great mass of the people of this country are prepared to support us, if the necessity should arise, in any measures we may think

II. From the  
Conference  
to the  
Ultimatum,  
June—  
October 1899.

it necessary to take to secure justice to British subjects in the Transvaal and due observance of the promises and conventions on which the independence of the Transvaal has been founded." . . . "We are willing to consider any alternative [to Sir A. Milner's Franchise proposals] that may be suggested, but we shall test them all by the same standard. Do they give this substantial and immediate representation? I am not going to dwell unnecessarily upon the illusory and piecemeal character of the first two proposals made by President Kruger."—Yet Mr. Schreiner had declared them to be entirely satisfactory.—"He is the representative of Dutch feeling in the Colonies. Good Gracious! What would the Dutch say if our laws bore any resemblance, however distant, to these proposals of President Kruger, which nevertheless Mr. Schreiner thought entirely adequate and satisfactory where men of British race were concerned?"

The *Daily News* said that Mr. Chamberlain's speech was "distinctly favourable for peace." That of Lord Salisbury (during this debate) was even firmer in tone than Mr. Chamberlain's. He was supported by the Earl of Kimberley who said :—

"Be firm by all means, but make it clear that you are in earnest. . . . It is the obvious duty of the Government to see that the forces we have in any part of the world are sufficient for any contingencies that may arise."

Between Mr. Chamberlain's hopeful speech of July 28th in the House, and the meeting of Parliament on October 17th, the negotiations failed even as the Conference had done. Thus the precise interpretation of the Conventions became a thing of no importance; the Conventions were torn up, an ultimatum was sent from the South African Republic, and war was declared on October 10th.

It is now immaterial whether one or other of the proposed franchise schemes would have given the Outlanders what they desired. The important thing, which will live in men's

Debate in the  
House, July  
28th, 1899.

The End of  
the Negotia-  
tions, July—  
September.

minds when all details of negotiations are forgotten, is that throughout them no substantial guarantees were offered by President Kruger that his proposals would be carried out, and that, when he was invited to submit those proposals to a searching criticism by experts, he withdrew them and substituted others, outwardly more favourable, but which were offered subject to conditions which the British Government could not accept.

It was these proposals of August 22nd which Mr. Chamberlain had received just before his speech at Highbury on the 26th. They were as follows :—

**Highbury  
Speech  
August 26th.**

A proposal for a five years' franchise would be laid before the Volksraad provided that,

(1). "... In the future no interference in the internal affairs of the Republic will take place."

(2). "Her Majesty's Government will not further insist on the assertion of the Suzerainty, the controversy on the subject being allowed tacitly to drop."

(3). "Arbitration (from which [any] Foreign element, other than Orange Free State, is to be excluded) will be conceded as soon as the Franchise Scheme has become law."

The first condition, if assented to, would have tied the hands of the Government completely. It should be remembered that Mr. Chamberlain's first Despatch after the Raid (February 1896), calling attention to the grievances which had precipitated it, and his Despatch of the autumn of 1896, remonstrating against various infringements of the Convention, particularly the Alien Immigration Law, had all been met by President Kruger with the reply that these matters were part of "the internal affairs of the Republic which England could not touch." To promise never to interfere in the future was therefore practically to abandon all British subjects in the Transvaal to their fate. What would have been said of the Colonial Secretary if he had consented to this demand? No wonder that Mr. Chamberlain's warning to President Kruger, in his speech



## TAKING THE REINS.

Mr. CHAMBERLAIN visited the Colonial Office on his return from the Continent, and subsequently had a consultation with Lord SALISBURY.  
*Daily Paper, November 2, 1895.*

From a *Punch* cartoon, November 9th, 1895.



at Highbury on August 28th, after the above despatch had been received, was a grave one :—

"I said that President Kruger was dribbling out his reforms and I warned him that the sands were running out. That was plain language and it was meant to be plain. But it was not meant to be offensive." . . .

"At that very moment President Steyn, and President Kruger had agreed upon their ultimatum and were only holding it back because their preparations were not complete."

Yet Mr. Chamberlain's answer to the above proposals (August 28th) was still conciliatory. In effect, it said :

"Your proposals we could accept; but we cannot accept your first condition, that we should promise never to interfere again to protect our subjects in a foreign country from injustice. We agree to discuss the form and scope of a Tribunal of Arbitration from which foreigners and foreign influence are excluded—such discussion to take place at a further conference between President Kruger and Sir A. Milner at Cape Town. On the question of Suzerainty we again refer you to our earlier Despatch on this subject (of July 13th), which states that 'Her Majesty's Government have no intention of continuing to discuss this question.'"

In answer to this Despatch the Transvaal Government withdrew the only reasonable offer they had made, because Great Britain would not accept all three conditions on which it was based, and they then proposed to go back to those franchise proposals which her Majesty's Government had already decided were quite inadequate—proposals which Mr. Robson, Q.C., an Opposition Member, declared were "a grotesque and palpable sham."

Mr. Chamberlain made one more attempt to obtain the irreducible minimum which Sir A. Milner had asked for at the Conference five months before, and on September 8th, after a Cabinet Council

Colonial  
Office  
Despatch A,  
August 28th.

Boer reply  
to Despatch  
A.

September  
8th,  
Despatch B.

a reply was sent which still left an open door. In substance it said :

"We cannot go back to proposals which we have already condemned and dismissed. We are still willing to accept the five years' franchise offered by you if the unsuitable conditions attached to it are withdrawn, and provided that on examination (by a joint or unilateral inquiry) it is found to give the Outlanders what is required, 'namely, substantial and immediate representation.' It is understood that they will be allowed to use their own language in the Raad. If you cannot agree to these proposals we can no longer discuss your terms, but will formulate our own proposals for a final settlement."

"At this time," said Mr. Chamberlain, "we accepted nine-tenths of the Boer proposals and conditions"—(1) The discussion of the suzerainty could be allowed to drop (though the claim was maintained as rigidly as before); (2) Arbitration could be conceded on certain questions; but (3) (and here came the one-tenth, more properly called one-third, which could not be accepted) the Government would never promise to forego their right of protecting their subjects and interfering if necessary for that purpose. As this last was the only point of real difference between the two Governments, Mr. Chamberlain maintained that he thought the above Boer proposals and his own answer to them most hopeful, inasmuch as two conditions out of the three had been conceded by him.

In reply President Kruger refused to lay before the Volksraad any proposals for a five years' franchise unless accompanied by all those conditions which

**Boer Reply to Despatch B.**

Her Majesty's Government had already refused, while at the same time he reiterated his demand for arbitration, concluding with a hope that Her Majesty's Government would abandon the idea of making new proposals more difficult for this Government and imposing new conditions!

To realise the extraordinary character of this last remark it should be remembered that the five years' franchise, with an inquiry into its methods of working, was proposed by



Mr. Chamberlain at the Bloemfontein Conference four months before, and insisted on by him throughout the negotiations, more particularly in his last Despatch. How then could it be called a "new proposal?" "The conditions" of the inquiry had only been varied in order to make them easier for the Transvaal Government.

This answer to the demands of the British Government practically closed the door to all further negotiations. On all hands the intense gravity of the situation was felt. The state of things in the Transvaal was growing rapidly worse. The exodus from Johannesburg continued daily and the treatment of Outlanders by the Boers was fast becoming unbearable. Urgent appeals were coming in from Natal for increased protection; from Mafeking came petitions for food and for soldiers, while Kimberley's appeal to the Cape Government was altogether disregarded. To add to the excitement and indignation, Mr. Schreiner issued a proclamation ordering Cape Colony to remain neutral in the event of war, and those Civil Servants who were members of Volunteer Corps were not allowed to be called out. Meantime, the President of the Orange Free State informed Sir A. Milner that Great Britain was infringing the Convention and that he would support the sister-Republic if war broke out.

The last Despatch sent from Great Britain informed the Transvaal Government that it was useless to  
**September 22nd, Despatch C.** prolong negotiations already extending over four months, "themselves the climax of an agitation extending over a period of more than five years," and concluded as follows:—

"Her Majesty's Government are now compelled to consider the situation afresh, and to formulate their own proposals for a final settlement of the issues which have been created in South Africa by the policy constantly followed for many years by the Government of the South African Republic. They will communicate to you the result of their deliberations in a later Despatch."

This Despatch was delayed to give President Kruger yet another chance, but the policy of patience was played out.

War broke out at the beginning of October. The South African Republic did not wait for the new proposals of the British Government but formulated their own. Their Ultimatum demanded :—

**Boer Reply to  
Despatch C.  
The  
Ultimatum,  
October 9th,  
1899.**

(1), An immediate withdrawal of our troops from the frontier ; (2), The return of all our troops upon the high seas ; (3), The reduction of garrisons to a force which the Boers thought sufficient ; (4), Arbitration be conceded on all points at issue ; (5), All claim to the Suzerainty to be withdrawn ; (6), The cessation of all interference on behalf of English subjects in the Transvaal. Lastly, Our consent to these terms must be given before 5 p.m., October 11th, 1899. Failing a satisfactory answer, Great Britain would be held to have declared war.

The door was not only shut, it was slammed !

Much nonsense has been talked about the impudence of this Ultimatum. When a man puts an end to a dispute by leaving the room it is not unusual for him to slam the door, but the temper was there before the door was closed. The Ultimatum was the match that started the war, but the fire was ready laid ; the responsibility for lighting it certainly rests with President Kruger, but it is of little consequence whether he lighted it with a match or a torch.

Was President Kruger in earnest during these negotiations, or was he playing for delay ? Did he attach so much importance to a promise from the British Government never to interfere again on behalf of its subjects in the Transvaal, because he anticipated that, under his rule, further interference would become necessary ?

It was impossible that Mr. Chamberlain with his wide experience of negotiations and of negotiators, should allow himself to be drawn into accepting paper concessions while submitting to have his hands tied, so that he could not afterwards protest should the concessions not be carried out, or should the spirit of them be violated. From Great

Britain a very good guarantee against future interference was demanded—no less indeed than the abrogation of the Suzerainty claim and the adoption of Arbitration on all points at issue between the two Governments.

If it were admitted that the Suzerainty claim could be discussed, its power would be gone, and all differences must then be treated as between “two sovereign international States.”

**Essential  
Importance  
of the  
Suzerainty.**

“We talk of the independence of the Transvaal,” said Mr. Chamberlain, at the opening of Parliament October 19th, 1899, “we really mean the independence of the Transvaal—as limited by the Convention.”

“‘We were not going to fight about a word,’ [Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman had said]. Certainly not—not this Government or any other. But is he willing to fight about the substance? . . .

“The cardinal and essential fact, is supremacy, pre-dominance, preponderance, paramountcy—call it what you will. I do not care a brass button which of these words you choose—you may call it ‘Abracadabra’ if you like—provided you have the substance.”

Why was Mr. Chamberlain, why were Lord Salisbury and Lord Kimberley, equally determined to maintain the substance of our supremacy over the Transvaal Republic? The answer is comparatively simple. Broadly it is because otherwise the Republic could enlarge her borders, could negotiate for a port, could hamper our trade and our territorial expansion, could form alliances against us, and could aim at enforcing in her turn her domination over the whole of British South Africa.

The end had come ; and the end was not peace, but war.

**The War.** The minds of men were divided as to its necessity.

Some thought it might have been avoided ; others, the majority, believed that though it might have been postponed, it could not have been avoided.

Only President Kruger and his advisers know the truth—know whether they ever intended to content themselves with

their own small Republic and their own concerns, to do justice and administer honestly an upright law to the stranger within their gate. If they had done so, they might have preserved their kingdom unimpaired and their authority unquestioned; all England asked was justice for her subjects. The Suzerainty was a small thing compared with that, but when justice was denied, it became the most important thing of all, for it was the only instrument, besides force, by which justice could be obtained.

But President Kruger was determined to deny our supremacy. Who then was to forego their claim? If neither State, then the arbitrament of war was the only award that could be accepted. Let those who think that England should have withdrawn her demands, ask themselves, ask the free Dutch in Cape Colony, if they are willing to exchange the rights which they now enjoy and which all loyal British subjects enjoy, for the position of the unrepresented, over-taxed, despised Outlanders under Boer rule? It is idle to talk of this war as a war caused by a dispute as to a seven or five years' franchise. The real question was, English or Dutch in South Africa. If the answer were Dutch, then it was all too likely that those dissensions, which were the real cause of the weakness that made the annexation of the Republic possible in 1877, would again appear; and instead of war between Briton and Boer, South Africa, (once the English were no longer supreme) would be torn from end to end by war between Boer and Boer. Hollander, Boer, and German, supported by all the faction-mongers of Europe and America, would have struggled for supremacy.

The discovery of the Pretoria Correspondence, (published as a Parliamentary Paper, August, 1900), has thrown much light upon the opinions of responsible Colonial Officials, on President Kruger, his policy and his people. The letters were from the Chief Justice of Cape Colony, Sir J. H. de Villiers; from Mr. Merriman, a prominent member of the Africander Bond, and a member of the Cape Parliament; some were

addressed to President Steyn and Mr. Fischer, requesting their good services in bringing President Kruger to a more reasonable frame of mind ; and, lastly, there were letters from three members of the House of Commons, Mr. John Ellis, Dr. Clark, and Mr. Labouchere. Dr. Clark wrote to President Kruger and General Joubert, on the eve of war, advising Kruger to seize the passes ; Mr. Labouchere wrote to Mr. Montagu White immediately after the Transvaal Debate of July 1899, and while the negotiations between this country and the Republic were at an acute stage, urging delay in these negotiations.

The value of the first part of this correspondence lay in its quite unpremeditated confirmation of the contention of the Government that the war was inevitable, because President Kruger never meant to give substantial representation, or any other reform for which the Outlanders asked.

It showed further, also quite unintentionally, that men entirely hostile to the Colonial Secretary were yet pressing on President Kruger substantial reforms, and it was admitted, even by Mr. Merriman, that the demands of the Outlanders were not excessive. He went further and said that, leaving the Outlanders out of the question altogether, the Republic was so rotten that it must have reformed itself, if it was to continue much longer in existence.

These letters are the best justification for the Unionist policy in South Africa that has yet appeared.

Mr. Merriman's testimony is the more valuable as he is entirely hostile to Mr. Chamberlain.

"The only effect of a dogged refusal [on the part of Kruger to grant reforms] will be to set both Chamberlain and Rhodes on their feet again as far as regards South African affairs—which would be a calamity."

Of President Kruger he says :—

"One cannot conceal the fact that the greatest danger to the future lies in the attitude of President Kruger and his vain hope of building up a State on the foundation of a

narrow, unenlightened minority, and his obstinate rejection of all prospect of using materials which lie ready to his hand to establish a true Republic on a broad, liberal basis. The report of recent discussions in the Volksraad, on his finances and their mismanagement, fill one with apprehension. Such a state of affairs cannot last, it must break down from inherent rottenness, and it will be well if the fall does not sweep away the freedom of all of us. . . . Humanly speaking, the advice and good-will of the Free State is the only thing that stands between the South African Republic and a catastrophe. . . ."

Again he says, "Lippert represents Kruger—as others describe him—as more dogged and bigoted than ever, and surrounded by a crew of self-seekers who prevent him from seeing straight. . . . The deplorable confusion and mal-administration of his financial arrangements still continue, and are a standing menace to the peace of South Africa.

"Yet, judging from the utterances of the leading men from the Rand who come down here [Cape Town], *a very moderate reform would satisfy all except those who do not want to be satisfied.* . . . I most strongly urge you to use your utmost influence to bear on President Kruger, to concede some colourable measure of reform, not so much in the interests of outsiders, as in those of his own State.

"Granted he does nothing. What is the future? His Boers, the backbone of the country, are perishing off the land; hundreds have become impoverished loafers, landless hangers-on of the town population. In his own interests he should recruit his Republic with new blood—and *the sands are running out.* I say this irrespective of the agitation about *Outlanders.* The fabric will go to pieces of its own accord unless this is done. . . . A moderate franchise reform and municipal privileges would go far to satisfy any reasonable people. . . ."

Writing in May 1899, just before the Bloemfontein Conference, from which he hoped great things, Sir H. J. H. de Villiers tells President Steyn that:—

"The franchise proposal made by the President seems to be simply ridiculous. I am quite certain that, if in 1881 it had been known to my fellow Commissioners that the President would adopt his retrogressive policy [towards the

Outlanders], neither President Brand [President of the Orange Free State] nor I, would ever have induced them to sign the Convention. They would have advised the Secretary of State to let matters revert to the condition in which they were before peace was concluded—in other words, to recommence the war. . . .”

As to the good faith of the Republic, he says :—

“I fear there would always still be a *danger of the Volksraad revoking the gift before it has come into operation.*”

In a later letter, July 1899, after the Conference had failed, he writes to Mr. Fischer :—

“Mr. Chamberlain’s speech [in the House, July 28th] was more moderate than I expected it would be, and as he holds out an olive branch in the form of a joint inquiry into the franchise proposals, would it not be well to meet him in this matter? . . . The British Public is determined to see this thing through. . . . I don’t think that President Kruger and his friends realise the gravity of the situation. . . . The Transvaal will soon not have a friend left among the cultivated classes. . . . It is quite clear to the world that he [Kruger] would not have done as much as he has done if pressure had not been applied. . . .”

There is ample proof in this correspondence that Kruger’s fatal obstinacy was encouraged by, if not partially due to, the attitude of a section of the Liberal party at home, as well as by his friends at the Cape. Mr. Melius de Villiers writes :—

“I feel assured a Liberal Ministry will be willing to reconsider the relations of the South African Republic to England, and even to revoke the Convention of London.”

“We must now play to win time,” says Mr. Te Water, writing to President Steyn. “Governments are not perpetual, and I pray that the present team, so unjustly disposed towards us, may receive their reward before long. Their successors, I am certain, will follow a less hateful policy towards us. . . . It is honestly the time now to yield a little, *however one may later again tighten the rope.*”

It was little wonder President Kruger believed that there was hope for him with the Opposition. Mr. Labouchere wrote :—

“The great thing is to gain time. In a few months we shall be howling about something in another part of the world . . .” [and said to Mr. White], “you ought to spin out the negotiations for quite two or three months.”

President Kruger appealed to arms and the question of supremacy, to which he attached such fatal importance has, by that most terrible tribunal, been decided for ever.

The Sons of the Empire the wide world over offered assistance to Her Majesty in the noblest manner; that assistance was accepted at first to a limited extent, later with both hands, thankfully and promptly. These offers were made through the Colonial Office. It became a storehouse of Imperial loyalty which might be drawn upon to an almost unlimited extent.

A determined attempt has been made to fasten the responsibility for the war on the Colonial Secretary but that responsibility rests equally upon, and is equally accepted by, the whole Cabinet, the whole of the Unionist Government of 1895–1900. The Premier, as Premier, bears the heaviest share, but he has the support of one of the most united Ministries of modern times.



## CHAPTER XXX

### *THE GOVERNMENT AND THE COUNTRY*

AUTUMN SESSION, OCTOBER, 1899—ATTACK ON THE MINISTRY—MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S DEFENCE—RECAPITULATION OF DISPUTE AND NEGOTIATIONS—PARLIAMENT PROROGUED—LEICESTER SPEECH—SPEECH IN BIRMINGHAM—VISIT TO DUBLIN—SESSION OF 1900—SPEECHES OF LORD SALISBURY, LORD ROSEBERY, MR. BALFOUR, AND MR. CHAMBERLAIN—THE GOVERNMENT AND THE WAR OFFICE—MAJUBA DAY—LADYSMITH AND MAFEKING DAY—FALL OF PRETORIA.

PARLIAMENT met on October 17th to vote supplies for the prosecution of the campaign in South Africa and to call out the Reserves. It met amid great excitement; hostilities had already begun and the Boers were **Autumn Session, 1899.** swarming into Natal. We had promised to protect Natal with all the forces of the Empire, but we had not enough troops to defend even a small portion of it when war broke out.

The scene in the House on the first night of the Session was one of great brilliancy and excitement. In the House of Lords, the Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Cambridge were present, with the Grand Duke Michael of Russia, and the Crown Prince of Siam; whilst crowds of peeresses lined the balconies.

The attack on the Ministry during the debate on the **First Night, Attack on the Ministry, October 17th, 1899.** address was of a twofold and contradictory nature. One section asked why we had not better provided against war, and had not had double or treble the men in South Africa in case it should break out. The other protested that war need never have broken out

and that the sending of the few troops already despatched had sensibly increased the difficulties of the situation and precipitated the conflict. Occasionally the same Member, in some curious way, wished to fling both charges at the Government.

Lord Kimberley protested that his party were "as ready as those on the other side of the House to give their support to measures necessary to vindicate the honour and support the interests of the Empire," though he criticised as premature the publication of certain despatches by the Colonial Office, which might have increased the chances of war.

Lord Salisbury reminded the House that the country must be kept informed of the progress of events. A responsible Minister is bound to give such information as will range behind him all the power, and all the physical force, of those who are devoted to his cause. He could not allow British interests at the Cape to fall away from the Crown by reason of apathy or ignorance, which would take the place of support and enthusiasm, the sentiment and the loyalty evoked by a Minister, who informed the minds of the public and laid before them the real facts of the case. As for offending President Kruger's sensibilities, he scouted the idea. "The theory seems to be that President Kruger is an amiable and very sensitive old man, who expresses his feelings with a fervour more becoming a hysterical young lady than the President of a Republic. . . . My impression is, or certainly was, that he was the sort of man who would say 'that hard words break no bones,' and if he got the kind of policy he wanted, he would not be much troubled as to the English phraseology in which it was wrapped up. . . . My belief is that the desire to get rid of the word 'Suzerainty' and the reality which it expresses, has been the dream of President Kruger's life."

In the House of Commons Mr. Balfour undertook the defence of the Government and referred, amid great cheering, to the splendid aid from our self-governing colonies, who would never have thrown themselves into our cause, had

## SAY "SUZERAIN."



"Confound you! say 'Suzerain'!"

From the cartoon by Mr. F. C. Gould in *The Westminster Gazette*, May 31st, 1898.



we been engaged in "piratical attempts against the liberties of another people."

On the following day (October 18th) "Mr. Chamberlain was a sort of Parliamentary Aunt Sally all the afternoon," said the London Correspondent of the *Birmingham Post*. Mr. Philip Stanhope moved an amendment to the Address, strongly disapproving of the conduct of our negotiations with the Government of the Transvaal; and as Mr. Chamberlain had conducted those negotiations, it was of course intended as a direct attack upon him. He listened carefully to all that was said, and promised his critics full satisfaction on the morrow; to that end he gently suggested that Sir William Harcourt should supply him with details as to which speeches and despatches were "provocative," but beyond the Highbury speech, Sir William could not at the moment enumerate any, or if he could, he declined to do so. Successive Secretaries of State, said Sir William, had been under the belief that the suzerainty question was dropped in 1884.

"Never!" said Mr. Chamberlain emphatically.

Sir William was not convinced, and asked for the "opinions on that point of the law officers of the Crown."

"I don't know what they are," answered Mr. Chamberlain; "but I will produce the opinion of your own Secretary of State for the Colonies if you like!"

The third night of the Session, however, was the one most eagerly looked for, and the one on which excitement rose highest. Not since Mr. Gladstone introduced his Home Rule Bill had the House been so crowded. Some Members stood for two hours and forty minutes while Mr. Chamberlain was speaking, for a number of them could not obtain seats; others sat on the steps of the gangways, while the peers gathered in great numbers in their gallery.

Mr. Chamberlain, as on the opening night of the Session, was greeted with an outburst of cheering. His manner was calm and conciliatory throughout, and he laboured more to

Second Night.  
Attack on  
Mr. Chamber-  
lain, October  
18th.

The Third  
Night.  
Mr. Chamber-  
lain's Reply,  
October 19th.

convince the House of the difficulties of the negotiations, the changes of front of President Kruger, and the real patience of the Colonial Office, than to score off his opponents, or to show up the fickleness of the Opposition and the uselessness of their criticisms. He addressed himself chiefly to the answering of Sir William Harcourt's speech, the worthiest presentment of the case of those who differed from the Government. He recapitulated all the despatches and the conclusions to be drawn from them, which have already been set forth in the last chapter, and no one who heard his summing up could doubt that the Colonial Secretary, with better means of judgment than most men, was at last convinced that war was inevitable. He had not believed it once, but the conclusion had been forced upon him. An honourable compact had been made in 1884, between two States. Great Britain had fulfilled her part of that compact, the Transvaal had broken hers again and again. The question now was, Should that compact become a dead letter? If not, how was it to be enforced? One method, that of moral suasion, had been tried—and had failed—what was to be tried next? While the British Government were debating this question, President Kruger gave the answer—War. And by his preparedness for war, Mr. Chamberlain was forced to the conclusion that the South African Republic had long intended to make that the answer. He proved

**The  
Suzerainty  
Question.**

that the Boers first raised the question of the Suzerainty, and that behind this seemingly trivial contention about a word, lay the determination to which Lord Salisbury had alluded, a determination to get rid of the thing itself. The flagrant infringements of

**Four  
Infringe-  
ments of  
Convention.**

the Convention which had already brought us to the verge of war, showed that President Kruger cared nothing for any remonstrance which was not backed up by a show of force.<sup>1</sup> All these infringements

<sup>1</sup> These infringements were four in number: (1) A raid into Bechuana-land, necessitating the Warren expedition 1885, with invasions of Zululand and Swaziland; (2) in 1894 the commandeering of British subjects to fight

of the Convention showed the real repudiation of that authority which was signified by the phrase "the Suzerainty of Great Britain."

Mr. Chamberlain traced the history of the Bloemfontein Conference from which so much had been expected; he accepted full responsibility for everything Sir Alfred Milner had done, and he defended the publication of Despatches which kept the British people informed of the real dangers of the situation.

To Natal and the Colonies, far removed from South Africa, he had warmest praise and heartiest acknowledgments to offer for the magnificent demonstration of loyalty, and not only of loyalty, but of sympathy with our aims which had been made by them.

**Tribute  
to the  
Colonists.**

He reminded the Opposition, as he had reminded them in July, that they had not a monopoly of the wish for peace, and of hatred of war :—

"We have been, as I have shown, as anxious for peace as any man on the other side of this House or in the country; but we have held that there are things even more important than peace itself, and that in order to gain these things it may sometimes be necessary to face the contingency of war. In our endeavour to maintain peace we have shown the utmost conciliation. We have shown endless patience. We have run some risk; but we have never been prepared from first to last, for the sake of peace, either to betray our countrymen, or to allow this paramountcy to be taken from us. President Kruger has settled the issue. He has appealed to the God of Battles. And I say, with all reverence and gravity, we accept the appeal, believing that we have our quarrel just."

Mr. Stanhope's Amendment was negatived by two hundred and twenty-seven votes, after a severe criticism of Mr. Chamberlain's policy by Mr. Morley and Sir Edward Clarke.

against the natives; (3) in 1895 the closing of the Drifts to the passage of Cape merchandise; (4) in 1897 the Alien Immigration Act, passed in the teeth of our remonstrances, though afterwards repealed.

The latter, as a protest against the war, severed his connection with the Liberal-Unionists. Mr. Balfour summed up the attacks made on the Colonial policy of the Government as being of two kinds—the one calculated on a hypothesis of criminality in forcing on a war, the other on a hypothesis of idiocy in drifting helplessly into it. Neither could be justified.

The kind of attack to which the Colonial Secretary was subjected when he acted as a "Parliamentary Aunt Sally," is indicated by Mr. Philip Stanhope's and Mr. W. Redmond's speeches. The latter descended to offensive personalities. Mr. Chamberlain, he said, had in turn been everything and nothing; the war was the result of that overweening ambition which seldom came to gentlemen, but often to people who aspired to mix with them. After this gentlemanly remark the Speaker called upon Mr. Redmond to withdraw. Mr. Stanhope was equally violent, if less vulgar. He suggested Mr. Chamberlain's complicity with the Jameson Raid and challenged him to produce certain of the Hawkesley letters; advised him to read Mr. Stead's "Appeal to Honest Men;" declared that Sir Alfred Milner fomented the differences he was sent out to heal, and though he acquitted the Government as a whole, he was convinced that Sir Alfred Milner, Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Rhodes had made up their minds for the last two or three years that war should be the only termination of the crisis, and for twelve or fourteen months had been working for that end.

"To such a statement, there is," said Mr. Chamberlain "no Parliamentary language which can express my reply." It was such a charge against a responsible Minister of the Crown and against a distinguished public servant, that "if they were guilty, impeachment would be too good for them. . . . What proof did the hon. member give of this monstrous charge? Not one scrap, not one iota, not one fact, not one quotation."

The following is a specimen of journalistic Pro-Boer criticism on this speech :—



"Mr. Chamberlain said last night that, if he and Sir A. Milner be guilty of having deliberately brought about this war, impeachment would be too good for them. It is too good for them, and we hope the day will come when they will meet with the retribution which they merit."

"Acrimonious," "a flood of venomous invective," "gall and wormwood," "nauseous," were some of the epithets applied to Mr. Chamberlain's defence of the Government, and even these criticisms must be regarded as playful sarcasm compared with the Irish Members' comments on the war, and the Colonial Secretary's share in it. But amends for this bitterness were made by the warmth of the Unionist support which manifested itself at every opportunity.

Parliament was prorogued on October 27th, and Mr. Chamberlain returned home to obtain rest and quiet after the prolonged strain of the past three months. It was only a very partial rest that was possible, for the continued offer of Colonial troops, and the needs of the Colonies of Natal and the Cape taxed the working powers of the Colonial Office officials severely.

In November the Liberal-Unionist Annual Conference was held at Leicester, and Mr. Chamberlain made two speeches there. Both were important, but the second, in consequence of the criticism it provoked, will always be known as "The Leicester Speech." In the first Mr. Chamberlain was occupied with a general review of the reasons why the war was undertaken, the spirit in which it was being prosecuted, and the criticisms of the Opposition upon it. The Colonial Secretary's generous tribute to the Colonial troops was enthusiastically cheered. Their assistance, he said, was a demonstration open to all the world of the essential unity of the British Empire; it was also a testimony to the justice of our cause, for how could the millionaires' greed of gold (said to be the moving cause of this war) affect our liberty-loving colonists in Canada and Australia? He concluded his speech with a review of the work of the Unionist Government.

Parliament  
Prorogued,  
October 27th,  
1899.

Leicester  
Speech,  
November  
29th-30th,  
1899.

The following day, at a complimentary luncheon, Mr. Chamberlain delivered the speech which excited so much attention. The German Emperor had just concluded a private visit to the Queen at Windsor, the first he had paid since he sent his congratulatory telegram to President Kruger in 1896. During this visit Mr. Chamberlain had an important interview with the Kaiser and his Ministers. It was of course surmised that Germany's attitude towards the Boers and towards England as a belligerent, was the subject under discussion as well as matters relating to general British and German Colonial interests. The attitude of the Emperor left no doubt that he was animated by friendly feelings towards England, and that any hopes of German intervention on which President Kruger might be building were baseless. Knowing this, Mr. Chamberlain wished in his speech to emphasise the cordiality of our relationship with those countries whose good wishes must always be of great importance to us, namely, Germany and America.

"I have," he said, "almost as many friends in the United States as I have here, and I can conceive of **Our Alliance.** no greater disaster which could befall the two countries, or which could befall mankind, than that they should find themselves in a hostile attitude towards each other."

"The same sentiments which bring us into close sympathy with the United States of America may also be evoked to bring us into closer sympathy and alliance with the Empire of Germany . . . and if the union between England and America is a powerful factor in the cause of peace, a new Triple Alliance between the Teutonic race and the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race will be a still more potent influence in the future of the world.

"... To me it seems to matter little whether you have an alliance which is committed to paper, or whether you have an understanding which exists in the minds of the statesmen of the respective countries. An understanding, perhaps, is better than the alliance, which may stereotype arrangements, which cannot be accepted as permanent, in view of the changing circumstances from day to day. . . ."

Both interest and sentiment united us to Germany ; but in the case of nations alliances did not rest upon interest alone. . . . "The world is not governed entirely by interest, or, in my opinion, particularly by interest. Sentiment is one of the greatest factors in all our affairs, and there is no reason why the sentiments of the people of the two countries should not be in accord."

As a striking illustration of the power of sentiment, Mr. Chamberlain instanced the intense indignation against the vile caricatures of Her Majesty, recently published by French newspapers which had not spared

"the, to us, almost sacred person of the Queen. These attacks upon Her Majesty, whether as ruler of this Imperial State, or still more as a woman, have provoked in this country a natural indignation which will have serious consequences, if our neighbours do not mend their manners."

One sometimes reflects how dull the newspapers would be without Mr. Chamberlain's speeches, but it is safer to say how lost the critics, the leader-writers, and the opinion-makers generally would be, if it were not for the excellent opportunity which Mr. Chamberlain at proper intervals affords them of "going for" him and his policy. If he were removed from the political arena, who would be the next man sufficiently plain-spoken, sufficiently important, to act as their target? Certainly five days out of six it would be difficult to pick up a newspaper, on either side, without finding in it an allusion, more or less remote, to something Mr. Chamberlain has said or done, or not said or not done. He has probably supplied more "copy" than any other living Englishman, and he has supplied it more continuously. Lord Derby, says Sir Edward Russell, once remarked (in 1877-8) that Mr. Chamberlain—who at the moment was not very prominently before the public—reminded him of the American politician, of whom it was said: "He's beat, but he ain't going to stay beat!"

The Leicester speech called forth what might be described

as a hysteric howl. Many American and German papers made haste to say they did not want our alliance: the English papers said we ought to have had more dignity than to ask for it. Mr. Chamberlain smiled and said nothing. But no one was found to deny that such an alliance would greatly make for peace, or that it is not desirable for us to remain permanently isolated from the Continent of Europe, as Mr. Chamberlain pointed out, and there have since been indications of a better appreciation of his speech.

In December he was speaking at a very different meeting in Birmingham, on the occasion of the annual prize distribution of the Municipal School of Art. **School of Art  
Speech,  
December  
1899.** In a pleasant and witty speech he gently chaffed the four thousand one hundred men and women who, by virtue of being engaged in the pursuit of Art, were supposed to constitute a

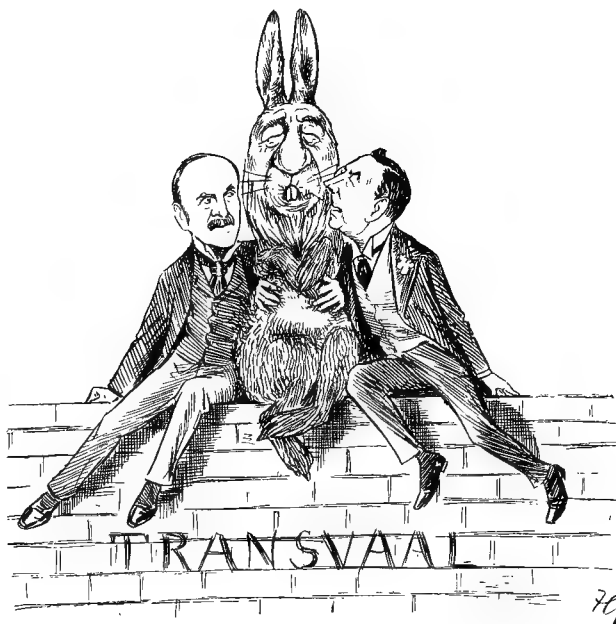
“priesthood, removed far above and beyond the aspirations of ordinary men. I gather that they must possess all the virtue that clustered about the Round Table of Tennysonian romance. When I reflect that there are in Birmingham alone four thousand one hundred ladies and gentlemen pursuing Art, no doubt upon these principles, I begin to think the millennium is not so far distant as people imagine!” As to the rewards of Art, “only those who have already in the pursuit of Art secured a more or less modest competence, are really qualified to impress upon you the fact that Art should be pursued for its own sake alone, and must always be expected to be its own sufficient reward.”

Theirs was not a school for the manufacture of geniuses, but for the instruction of the majority of ordinary workers in trades or crafts which lend themselves to Art—for the education of first-rate craftsmen, not the multiplication of tenth-rate artists.

Our duty was to “add grace and beauty to the accessories of our ordinary human life,” to improve common things rather than to produce masterpieces. The time was coming when Birmingham would refuse to tolerate bad architecture and sordid building.

The speech was received with hearty and sympathetic

Xi—SQUEALING AND SQUEEZING



MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND SIR ALFRED MILNER. Why do you keep on squealing "Suzerainty"?

BOER RABBIT. I can't help squealing, you squeeze me so hard!

[WESTMINSTER GAZETTE, September 9, 1899.]

From a cartoon by Mr. F. C. Gould, September 9th, 1899.



applause. It was delivered in a low, almost monotonous voice, without the animation which is so striking a feature of Mr. Chamberlain's political speeches, and it was evident that he was very tired, for he had come straight from London to the Hall. A very unusual incident occurred towards the close of the address. Mr. Chamberlain was at a loss for the exact word, or rather, transposed the words which he wished to use. Turning to Mrs. Chamberlain after a momentary hesitation he waited to be prompted; Mrs. Chamberlain made a suggestion, but Mr. Chamberlain still hesitated, and then with a gesture expressive of impatience, amusement, and of "giving it up," he once again turned to his wife who, with the aid of the Lord Mayor, gave him the word he wanted. It was a slight matter, but the audience were keenly interested; to them it was extraordinary that Mr. Chamberlain of all people should be for a moment at a loss; it brought home to them the heavy mental strain he was bearing, and there was sympathy as well as amusement in the applause and laughter which greeted his smiling excuse:—"When I speak now I have to be extremely careful in the choice of my words, lest unhappily some editor may misunderstand me." It was barely a week since the Leicester speech and the allusion was plain to all.

Those who only know Mr. Chamberlain as a fighter and a politician, do not realise his kindly and sympathetic manner on occasions such as this. Tired as he was, he dispensed the prizes as if he knew each student personally, read, and in one case corrected, the names on the cards attached to the books, and called back a young girl who was leaving the desk without her medal.

On December 18th Mr. Chamberlain crossed to Dublin, where he received the Honorary Degree of LL.D. He was able to escape the round of speech-making which took place at the time he was installed as Lord Rector of Glasgow University, but there was an opportunity of saying a few kindly words about Lord Roberts, that distinguished Irishman, who had gone to the

Visit to  
Dublin. LL.D.  
December,  
1899.

front under the shadow of a terrible bereavement, and about the bravery of the Irish regiments at the war.

In spite of the violence of Mr. O'Brien at a meeting of the Transvaal Aid Committee, just before Mr. Chamberlain's arrival, (in which he intimated that hanging was too good for the traitor who, as Colonial Secretary, had betrayed his country into an unjust and ruthless war), the visit passed off quietly.

The Session of 1900 was looked forward to with little cheerfulness. The deep depression occasioned by the reverses of the autumn in the terrible week which saw the defeats of Stormberg, Magersfontein, and Colenso, and the continued acute anxiety of those whose relatives were shut up in Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking, all combined to cause that impatient misery which must find its outlet in blaming something or somebody. Two scapegoats were easily found, the War Office and the Cabinet, or, as some preferred to have it, Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Chamberlain simply. The opening of Parliament was eagerly looked for; the speeches in the recess had done nothing to dissipate the hopelessness and discontent, but the dogged determination to persevere did not for one moment waver. "We were beat; but we didn't mean to stay beat!"

The Session opened on January 31st, 1900, and the Queen's Speech intimated that the war bill would be a long one. Large expenditure for domestic reforms could not be asked for, but the programme of the Session would include Bills relating to:—

**Parliamentary Session, 1900.**

1. Company Law Amendment.
2. Agricultural Tenancies.
3. Ecclesiastical Assessments.
4. Education in Scotland.
5. Relief of the Tithe-payers in Ireland.
6. Secondary and Technical Education in England and Wales.
7. Money Lending Contracts.
8. Factory Law Amendment.
9. Lunacy Law Amendment.



10. Housing of the Working Classes Act.
11. Accidents to Railway Servants.
12. Prevention of Disenfranchisement of those on service in South Africa.

It was hoped that the Government would have some strong announcement of proposals to remedy the admitted deficiencies of our system of defence, and of the methods of the War Office, but Lord Salisbury's speech was received with disappointment by the public outside the House, with something like indignation within. Lord Rosebery, abandoning his recent non-committal attitude, bitterly criticised the Premier's matter and manner :—

“When I think of where we stand, I am appalled by the nature and style, the manner and matter of the speech of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, in addressing this ancient and hereditary House. . . . If the Government is to be successful I venture to say it will have to be inspired by a loftier tone and truer patriotism than we have heard from the Prime Minister to-night.”

But even Lord Rosebery assured the country in unmistakable terms that the war would be carried through to a finish, in spite of all the obstacles we were encountering. Mr. Balfour, in the Lower House, was able to point to a division of opinion in the Opposition ranks as to the proper termination of the war, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman found it somewhat awkward to be the spokesman of a party divided on so important a point. But Mr. Balfour's speech did little or nothing to remove the general depression, which arose from the fear that the Government were treating the situation too lightly, and were not prepared to admit any faults, though Mr. Wyndham's remarkable speech in defence of the War Office partly mitigated that fear.

Mr. Chamberlain did not speak until February 5th, and he practically concluded the debate, which was closed the following night. He had therefore the advantage of being able to sum up, and his speech did much to inspire fresh hope, for he assured the country

Debate on  
the Address.  
January 30th.

Mr. Chamber-  
lain's Speech.  
February 5th.

that the Cabinet was not divided and that the Government was fully determined to make amends for any errors which had been committed.

The Colonial Secretary's speech was conciliatory and patriotic instead of controversial. The following are some of the press comments upon it :—

"There is no question as to its immense adroitness, its deftness, its strong presentation of the case of the Government and of the case of the man who is at the head of the Colonial Department. It is expected by the public opinion of the House to strengthen Mr. Chamberlain's position, and especially by its avoidance of some of his characteristic faults ; by its excellence of temper ; his avoidance of controversy ; above all, by his acceptance of blame for the past and his strong resolution to do better in the future."

"Mr. Chamberlain," said a would-be wit, "threw over Lord Salisbury, threw over Mr. Balfour, got up in a white sheet, and sang 'Rule Britannia!'"

"It was like those speeches to which great popular audiences in the provinces are accustomed, for his delivery was for him slow, his voice was raised beyond his normal House of Commons pitch, and his manner had more animation than is usual with him here. . . . He stepped to the table, his frock-coat tightly buttoned, a pearly grey orchid as a *boutonnière*, and grasped the brass-bound box [on the table] with both hands. His appearance was the signal for a great outburst of cheering on the part of the Ministerialists, and he spoke for just five minutes under the hour."

The arguments of the speech were well placed, showing **Argument of the Speech.** that the present Government had followed Lord Ripon's lead in asking for the franchise for the Outlanders and that even Mr. Schreiner and the Cape Government, when their commercial interests were threatened by Mr. Kruger's closing of the Drifts in 1895, urged the Government to send an ultimatum. If the Opposition considered this an unnecessary, unrighteous, and unjust war, they should vote against it and not for its prosecution.

It was not the argumentative part of his speech that excited the most interest now, in which he was at his best, but his review of the needs of the present and of the policy of the future. He touched a sympathetic chord when he exclaimed :

“Undoubtedly there is sorrow in many homes ; do you suppose that any of us are insensible to it ? There is anxiety in our hearts, and there is above all in the minds of the people an overwhelming desire that every nerve shall be strained to bring this war to a triumphant conclusion. . . .

“I do feel that those who have lost in person, in friends, and in relatives, are entitled to have it insisted upon again that the war is just and necessary. I want the House to look at this matter broadly—not to look at the shreds and patches, but the drift of the river as it runs to the sea, and not paddle in the eddies which seem to, but do not, delay its course. Speaking from that point of view I say that the issues between Boer and Briton, between this country and the South African Republic, are great and real issues, and not technical issues.”

He reproved the Opposition for their gibes at the loyal English colonists, “who are now giving their property, their persons, their children, in order to aid Her Majesty in this conflict.”

“The strain and stress of war has been upon those men in Natal and in Cape Colony and they are bitterly hurt and injured by the neglect which is shown to their views, and the sneers to which they are subject.”

As to mistakes, the Government did not deny them.

“I have not spared the Government, I have admitted mistakes. But do not let us make a perhaps greater mistake. Do not let us exaggerate them . . . if the House thinks that our mistakes are unpardonable, we shall submit ourselves to their judgment.”

“ . . . When it began, undoubtedly the needs of the war were under-estimated, and at the same time, and as part of the same mistake, we failed to respond to the splendid offers which came from our Colonies. We accepted enough to show how much we valued their assistance, but we hesitated to put upon them any greater strain than we thought necessary. But what is happening now ? They

**Tribute to  
the Colonies.**

are multiplying their offers, and every one is gratefully and promptly appreciated and accepted. We shall have in this war before it is over an army of colonists called to the aid of Her Majesty, which will outnumber the British army at Waterloo, and be nearly equal to the total force in the Crimea."

"The splendid and, above all, the spontaneous rally of the Colonies to the Mother Country affords no slight compensation, even for the sufferings of war. What has brought them to our side? . . . It is that Imperial instinct which you deride and scorn. Our Colonies, repelled in the past by indifference and apathy, have responded to the sympathy which has recently been shown them . . . these people shortly—very shortly, as time is measured in history—are about to become great and populous nations, and now for the first time claim their share in the duties and responsibilities as well as in the privileges of empire."

And then comes a prophecy of the great Federation of the future.

"You have now to remember that you are the trustees not merely of a Kingdom, but of a Federation. It may not, indeed, be distinctly outlined, but it exists already in spirit. . . .

"We are advancing steadily, if slowly, to the realisation of that great federation of our race which will inevitably make for peace, liberty, and justice."

As for the future, the Government would lay before the House proposals for the defence of the country upon which they hoped to have the opinions of the whole House irrespective of party.

"Speaking for the Government, I say that so far as in us lies there shall be no second Majuba. Never again with our consent, if we have the power, shall the Boers be able to erect in the heart of South Africa, a citadel from whence proceed disaffection and race enmity. Never again shall they be able to endanger the paramountcy of Great Britain. Never again shall they be able to treat an Englishman as if he belonged to an inferior race."

If the Boers showed themselves fit for it, equality with the English and the Outlanders should be theirs; or a position

of subordination, if they remain unfit for equality ; a position of predominance never again.

At the end of February, on Majuba Day, Cronje, with four thousand men, surrendered to Field-Marshal Lord Roberts of Candahar. Two days later, Ladysmith was relieved by General Buller, and the boundless relief and exultation of the nation showed itself in ways which to sober-minded students of history in the future will appear incredible. Will it be believed that staid City men and keen stockbrokers shouted their "Hurrahs" all down Cheapside ; that from one end of London to the other men, women, and children waved their flags and threw their hats in the air ; that ladies decorated the sentries in Pall Mall with favours, unrebuked ; that a policeman changed his mechanical " Pass on, ladies, pass on, please," for a wild yell as he waved his helmet over his head, "'Ooray ! Good old Buller ! 'Ooray ! 'O-oray ?"

"Sentiment," said Mr. Chamberlain in November 1899, "plays a large part in the life of nations." In February 1900 he gave practical expression to this belief, by allowing for the first time a flag to float over the Colonial Office ; great was the amazement of the man in the street to see the Union Jack, and the Irish standard floating side by side in Downing Street. The Colonial Secretary was not forgotten in the general rejoicing ; a party of South Kensington students marching through the West End, made their way to 40, Prince's Gardens and called for Mr. Chamberlain. His son promised to convey their congratulations to his father, and Mrs. Chamberlain acknowledged them from the balcony. In Birmingham, bands played in Chamberlain Square at night, and toilers from the Black Country thronged into the town cheering and shouting, and here again Mr. Chamberlain was not forgotten. School children, Mason College students, work-people, paupers, all rejoiced ; the workmen at a factory telephoned to their Directors : " We aren't going to do any

more work to-day." The Directors telephoned back: "Don't!"

Such was the temper of the country, when Presidents Kruger and Steyn telegraphed their proposals for peace, proposals which, they said, had been delayed for fear of hurting our feelings, if they were put forward while the Boers were victorious. Now that we were winning they had no longer any scruples, and they would be satisfied by a simple acknowledgment of their status as a "Sovereign International State." Lord Salisbury's answer was a blank refusal to consider any terms of peace, coupled with a statement that independence would never again be granted to the two Republics.

On May 18th came the longed-for news of the relief of Mafeking, and London simply went mad with joy; the provinces copied her example, and all round the wide world the cheers followed each other to the furthest outposts of the Empire.

The demonstration in London was chiefly before the Mansion House, before the War Office, which for some days remained dark and grimly silent, and before the house of Colonel (now General) Baden-Powell, the commander of the Mafeking garrison.

The first official news was conveyed to the House by means of a telegram received at the Colonial Office from General Barton. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman distinguished himself by asking Mr. Balfour to "relieve the anxiety of the House with regard to the Whitsuntide holidays." The House shouted the horrid anti-climax down with cries of "Mafeking," "Mafeking," and Mr. Balfour joyfully replied that the news was at least semi-officially confirmed, and was undoubtedly authentic. He then satisfied the curiosity of the Leader of the Opposition as to the Whitsuntide holidays.

On the Queen's birthday the Vaal was crossed by Lord Roberts, and the country had not long to wait for the fall of Johannesburg and Pretoria. The news, as usual,

XII.—IN THE COLONIAL WARD.

COLONIAL WARD



NURSE CHAMBERLAIN: Here's your draught, Mr Kruger.

MR KRUGER. Is there any horrid suzerainty in it?

NURSE CHAMBERLAIN. No, there isn't; so you'd better drink it up quickly and get it over

(But Mr Kruger wouldn't.)

[WESTMINSTER GAZETTE, September 18, 1899.]

From a cartoon by Mr. F. C. Gould, September 14th, 1899.





first came unofficially, and was a trifle premature; but it was officially announced on June 5th that Pretoria had surrendered to our troops, and that the Union Jack, worked by Lady Roberts, waved over Johannesburg, the capital of the Rand.

Fall of  
Pretoria.  
June 5th,  
1900.

A few days earlier the Orange Free State had been formally proclaimed a British Dependency under the name of the Orange River Colony.

On September 1st the Transvaal was proclaimed a British Colony. President Kruger, with Mr. Reitz, fled to Lorenzo Marques at the end of September, having obtained "six months leave of absence." Lord Roberts immediately issued a Proclamation enjoining submission on the Boers in the conquered territory, and stated that the late President of the Transvaal had formally resigned.

As to the ultimate fate of the second Republic, Lord Salisbury, speaking at a dinner in June, had said emphatically "no shred of independence would henceforth be left to the two Dutch Republics." This terrible war must never be repeated, and we must see to it that we left no loophole for a recurrence of the state of things which had made it possible. The horrors of the war had been brought forcibly home to the Premier, through the presence of his son, Lord Edward Cecil, in Mafeking throughout the whole of the siege.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### *GENERAL COLONIAL POLICY*

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S COLONIAL VIEWS; SYMPATHY INSTEAD OF APATHY IN COLONIAL AFFAIRS—1. DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE—2. FULFILMENT OF OBLIGATIONS OF EMPIRE—3. IMPERIAL FEDERATION—THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH BILL, MAY 14TH, 1900—SECOND READING, MAY 21ST.

**S**ELDOM had a brilliant minister been at the Colonial Office before 1895; it was a department which, though it concerned the welfare of millions, interested few and bored a great many. There is no doubt that Mr. Chamberlain has found the work of the Colonial Office absorbingly interesting and a wide field for his many-sided statemanship. The broad outlines of Colonial policy demand the experience of a great administrator, the extraordinary multiplicity of detail requires the method of a clever organiser.

The surprise when Mr. Chamberlain accepted the Colonial Secretaryship was great and widely expressed. Few had noticed his special study of Colonial questions, yet interest in such questions was for him no new thing. It dated, indeed, from his old Debating Society days, and ten years before he took the office he now holds, he told his constituents that: "Our fellow-subjects in the Colonies may rest assured that their liberties, their rights, their interests are as dear to us as our own; and if ever they are seriously menaced, the whole power of the country will be exerted for their defence, and the English democracy will stand shoulder to shoulder throughout the world to maintain the honour and integrity of the Empire."

In his election address in 1895, Mr. Chamberlain speaks of extending our influence and commerce in the vast undeveloped regions under the British flag. In a letter written in July 1895, after his acceptance of the Colonial Secretaryship, he says :—

“ I have taken office with two objects ; to see whether something cannot be done to bring the self-governing Colonies and ourselves into closer relations, and to attempt the development of the resources of the Crown Colonies, especially to increase our trade with those Colonies.”

And at the Royal Colonial Institute Dinner, in 1897, he was still more explicit as to his reasons for assuming office :—

“ It was my earnest, I might say almost my only ambition when I took the office to which the Queen was pleased to appoint me, that I might be able to do something to draw closer the bond between ourselves and the Colonies, because I have felt that on this alliance between nations of British race the future of this great Empire must depend.”

“ I want,” he exclaimed, when explaining his idea in inviting the Colonial Premiers and troops to share in the Diamond Jubilee, “ I want to show the Colonies that the days of apathy and indifference have long ago passed away. I want to prove to them that we are as proud of them as we believe they are proud of us ; that we have confidence in their future, and we hope that in their closer union with ourselves in time to come, the British Empire, founded on freedom, buttressed by affectionate sentiment, fortified by mutual interest, shall stand impregnable, unassailable, ‘ foursquare to all the winds that blow.’ ”

“ I believe that the prospect of a really united Empire is becoming a question of practical politics,” said Mr. Chamberlain at Glasgow, and his whole Colonial policy has been influenced by this belief. The principal features of this policy are three :—

1. The development of trade and commerce within the Empire ;

2. The fulfilments of the obligations of Empire ;

3. The progress towards Imperial Federation.

It has been said that Mr. Chamberlain had no such Imperial aspirations in his Radical days as a member of Mr. Gladstone's Government. But, as he was careful to point out, the Radicals could not always upset the coach as soon as the pace became too slow for them, and in view of Mr. Gladstone's dislike of a vigorous Colonial policy, and Mr. Bright's hostile attitude towards Colonial expansion,<sup>1</sup> it was not remarkable that the youngest member of the Government should concern himself with doing the work which lay ready to his hand, rather than that to which the leaders of his party were practically opposed.

Even so late as 1896 Mr. Gladstone showed his extraordinary want of faith in the Colonies, when he said :—" I have always maintained that we are bound by ties of honour and conscience to our Colonies. But the idea that the Colonies add to the strength of the Mother Country, appears to me to be as dark a superstition as any that existed in the Middle Ages."

" If the people of this country," said Mr. Chamberlain in 1895, " are not willing to invest some of their  
**I. The De-  
 velopment  
 of Trade.** superfluous wealth in the development of what I have called their great estate, then I see no future for these countries [our Colonies] and I think it would probably have been better if they had never come under our rule."

The neglected and backward state of our West African Colonies was one of the first matters that claimed Mr. Chamberlain's attention and during his period of office their advancement has been nothing less than remarkable. Railways have been constructed in Lagos, the Gold Coast, and Sierra Leone. The Niger Company's territory has been

<sup>1</sup> At a banquet given in Mr. Chamberlain's honour on his return from America in 1888, Mr. Bright, when speaking for the last time in Birmingham, said, " Imperial Federation was in the air—but it was a dream and an absurdity."

taken over by the Crown, and treaties have been concluded with France, Germany, and Belgium relative to disputed territory and trading rights, which have removed serious sources of friction, inimical to trade. The Benin Expedition and the Ashantee War largely swept away the iniquities which caused them to be undertaken, and the indirect benefit to trade is very great.

A more general effort in the development of trade is to be found in the issue of the business-like circular letter addressed by Mr. Chamberlain to the various Colonial Governments (November 1895) soon after assuming office. A request was made for information as to the extent to which foreign competition was supplanting English goods throughout the Colonies, for samples of the foreign goods, and for suggestions concerning Colonial products which might advantageously be exported to other parts of the British Empire, but had not yet found a market, together with information as to freight, quality, and price, for British importers.

The results of this inquiry were instructive and, with the assistance of the Chambers of Commerce, Mr. Chamberlain arranged to send the "samples" on tour to the commercial centres so that manufacturers might see for themselves in which departments they were being ousted by foreign competitors. He felt that British traders should not view with equanimity the loss of our trade with our Colonies and the encroachments of foreign competitors, or omit attention to small matters of detail which is often the whole secret of success.

Colonial Railway extension has made great strides since Mr. Chamberlain took office. In 1897 the Buluwayo Railway was opened, and Mr. Chamberlain's message which was delivered by Sir Alfred Milner, who went up from Cape Town to celebrate the great event, was greeted with much enthusiasm :—

"Please say from me that I am anxious to send a very hearty message of congratulation to settlers gathered to complete the railway which will afford aid and stimulus to every form of enterprise, and join North and South together."

The Uganda Railway, built under the auspices of the Foreign Office, is another great step towards opening up the heart of the Dark Continent.

Other subjects of great importance have claimed Mr. Chamberlain's most careful attention, amongst which are the following :—

The financial difficulties of the West Indian Colonies resulting in the Colonial Loans' Act of 1899, providing for loans to the extent of £3,300,000 to necessitous colonies.

A trans-Pacific Cable, a great scheme for consolidation of Imperial interests upon which Canadians and Australians have set their hearts.

The great predominance of spirits and low-class intoxicants in the imports into our West African Colonies.

The economic problems raised by the Continental sugar bounties, resulting in the so-called Reciprocity Treaties between the West Indian Colonies and the United States, involving discrimination in favour of the United States in the selection of articles for the free list or low duties.

The obligations attaching to the administration of the affairs of the Empire are of the most varied character, and their fulfilment entails an immense amount of miscellaneous work. Besides the Official

**II. Fulfilment  
of the  
Obligations  
of Empire.**

Correspondence which reaches the Colonial Office, there are private letters and appeals on all sorts of subjects connected with settlers and Colonists ; wrongs real or fancied, to be redressed ; protests against measures which conflict with the interests of individuals or sections of the people ; the administration of charitable funds raised to mitigate calamities of storm, flood, and earthquake.

Then, there is the care of the officials, their health and interests. It is well known that Mr. Chamberlain, equally with Mrs. Chamberlain, is specially interested in the working of the Colonial Nursing Association. The scheme, first submitted to the Colonial Office by Mrs. Francis Pigott (wife of a distinguished official in Mauritius), has grown

enormously since the Colonial Office gave its encouragement and approval to the work.

Mr. Chamberlain was also largely instrumental in establishing a special hospital for the study of Tropical Diseases at Greenwich in connection with the Seamen's Hospital. A similar institution has been founded in Liverpool.

The havoc wrought by malaria amongst the officials of the West African Colonies, so large a percentage of whom die or are invalided home just as they are becoming familiar with their duties, is a matter of deep concern to the Colonial Secretary, and it is hoped that the revelations of the part played by the mosquito as a cause of malarial fever, and the gradual drainage of swamps in the neighbourhood of towns as a remedy, will mitigate the scourge, and ensure greater safety to white men in these regions, and increased efficiency in the public service.

The dream of Federation is no new one to Mr. Chamberlain. In 1887 he said that the Confederation of the British Empire might exist only in the imagination of enthusiasts, but that it was a great idea; and the dream has certainly become more probable, and has advanced nearer realisation, since he became Colonial Secretary.

The presence of the Colonial Premiers and the contingents of troops from all the Colonies at the Diamond Jubilee procession was not without effect on the public, and the spectacle itself was of a nature that can never be forgotten. It fell to the Colonial Secretary to suggest and organise this great feature of the Jubilee, without which the pageant would have lost much of its significance. "Their presence," said Mr. Chamberlain, "was a demonstration of the power, influence, and the beneficent work of the Queen, a fitting tribute to the best and most revered of English sovereigns." Foremost in the group was the striking figure of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, of French blood and Roman Catholic faith, the Premier of the Canadian Confederation, whose glowing utterances seemed

Steps  
Towards the  
Federation  
of the  
Empire.

Significance  
of the  
Jubilee, 1897.

to bring Imperial Federation within reach of practical politics.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier's patriotic speeches gained point with the public by the simultaneous announcement of Canada's adoption of a tariff admitting all British goods at reduced rates of duty, a decision highly applauded by the preferential traders and appealing to the man in the street, although its inconsistency with the principle of the "open door," on which the Empire has expanded so vastly, and on which opposition to rival absorption of territory is mainly based, may not encourage its extension.

On June 9th, 1896, Mr. Chamberlain opened the third Congress of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, and in the course of his address, speaking more particularly to the Delegates from the Colonies, he said :—

"You have for a long time been in our thoughts . . . your claims, your wishes, the resources of your separate countries, your political conditions—all these things are becoming as familiar to us as if we were all provinces in one great kingdom, or States in a true Imperial Federation. I think that further knowledge must tend to complete the agreement between us, and that it will bring within the range of practical politics that splendid dream which has been cherished by all the greatest and most patriotic statesmen."

Alluding to the various proposals set down for discussion, Mr. Chamberlain said that the question of **Proposed Commercial Union.** mercial Union of the Empire "dwarfed into insignificance" all the others.

"If we had a Commercial Union throughout the Empire, of course there would have to be a Council of the Empire, and that Council would be called upon to watch over the execution of the arrangements which might be made; to consider and to make amendments in them from time to time; and whenever such a Council is established, surely there would naturally be remitted to it all these questions of communication and of commercial law in which all parts





*Photo by]*

MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND THE COLONIAL PREMIERS, 1897.

*[Elliott & Fry.*



of the Empire are mutually interested. Even Imperial Defence is only another name for the protection of Imperial Commerce. Gradually therefore by that prudent and experimental process by which all our greatest institutions have slowly been built up, we should in this way, I believe, approach to a result which would be little if at all distinguished from a real Federation of the Empire. . . . In my personal opinion, this is a question which dominates all other Imperial interests, to which everything else is secondary, and which is at the root of the problem with which we have now to deal. The establishment of commercial union throughout the Empire would only be the first step, but it would be the main step and the decisive step towards the realisation of the most inspiring idea that has ever entered into the mind of British statesmen."

The dividing line between the numerous apostles and opponents of Free Trade, Protection, and Preferential Trade was, however, too sharp to enable the Congress to arrive at any solution more definite than that closer commercial relations between the United Kingdom and the Colonies were highly desirable.

Mr. Chamberlain had admitted that the abandonment of Free Trade by the Mother Country or Protection by the Colonies were both equally out of the question, and that it was necessary to find a third course. But no definite resolution in the nature of a compromise was formally submitted, and a suggestion that a Union be formed restricting import duties to a definite *ad valorem* limit, with automatic retaliatory measures for mutual self-defence against any foreign country discriminating against the trade of the Union, and provision for the admission of foreign countries into such Union, was lost sight of in the multiplicity of a three-day debate.

During Mr. Chamberlain's period of office the most important demonstration of the solid basis upon which the unity of the Empire exists, has undoubtedly been found in the generous voluntary support so eagerly offered by the great self-governing

Colonial  
Assistance in  
South Africa.

Colonies to the Mother Country on the outbreak of war in South Africa. The prior despatch of a contingent of men from New South Wales to Egypt was an indication of the spirit that existed, but the assistance which has come from all quarters to repel the Boer attack has been a revelation to the world, and indicates that Imperial Federation cannot be far distant, and the passage of the Australian Commonwealth Bill marks a stage in our progress towards a Federated Empire.

In the spring of 1900, delegates from all the Australasian Colonies, excepting New Zealand, arrived in **Australian Commonwealth Bill.** England to promote the passage of a Bill about to be presented to the Imperial Parliament. This Bill adopted the plan of Federation agreed upon by those Colonies as the basis for a Federated "Australian Commonwealth."

To Earl Grey, said Mr. Chamberlain, the credit is due of being one of the first of Her Majesty's Ministers to recognise the eventual desirability of such a Union, and to Sir Henry Parkes of being the foremost Australian statesman to urge the idea upon his countrymen. In the hope of paving the way for Confederation, a Federal Council of Australasia was established, endowed by the Imperial Parliament with special legislative powers, but it can scarcely be said to have been a success. New South Wales steadily refused to send representatives or to take part in its proceedings. The Council met at intervals of a year or two, and its sessions were limited to periods of about seven days. Its work was practically confined to passing Acts affecting pearl fisheries in extra-territorial waters adjacent to Queensland and West Australia.

The movement for Federation assumed its first concrete form at a Convention in Sydney in 1891, when the first draft of the Commonwealth Bill was produced, which was "the foundation for all subsequent discussion." After successive Conventions and much debate, the Bill assumed the final form in which it was ratified by the electorates and was remitted to the Home Government for adoption

in 1900. New Zealand, however, stood aloof from the movement and Western Australia had not at that time formally accepted it when the other Australian Colonies sent delegates to England to promote the reception of the great Commonwealth Bill, foremost of whom was Mr. E. Barton, Q.C., representing New South Wales.

This Bill, Mr. Chamberlain, in a speech of great lucidity and tact, introduced to the House of Commons on May 14th, 1900, as "worthy of all the care and labour expended on it, and a monument of legislative competency."

The only serious objection taken by the Imperial Government to the Commonwealth Bill related to Clause 74, restricting the right of appeal to the Privy Council. This clause had not been submitted separately to the electorates but was nevertheless strenuously upheld by Mr. Barton. Foremost among Mr. Chamberlain's reasons for such objection was the extra-territorial legislative power already granted to the Federal Council. Mr. Chamberlain was met with sympathetic cheers when he said that there was no man in the House more anxious to maintain good feeling between ourselves and the Colonies than himself; nothing was more easy than to concede, nor more difficult than to refuse in a case of this kind. But believing that this clause as it stood was not only injurious to the best interests of Australia, but would "lead to complications which might be destructive to good relations and prejudicial to the unity of the Empire, we feel we are bound to ask the House to reconsider it."

Mr. Chamberlain's Speech,  
May 14th,  
1900.

"We have got to a point in our relations with our self-governing Colonies when, I think, we recognise once for all that our relations with them depend entirely upon their free will and absolute consent. The links between us at the present time are very slender; almost a touch might snap them; but slender and slight as they are—although we hope they will become stronger—still, if they are felt irksome by any one of our great Colonies, we shall not attempt to force them to wear them."

In conclusion, Mr. Chamberlain said :

"I am quite certain that no more important measure of legislation has ever been presented to Parliament and that nothing throughout the whole course of the Queen's reign will be a more beneficent feature in a long and glorious history."

No jarring note was heard in the House in reply to the speech, excepting Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's announcement that the Opposition

"would not be parties to the line the Government proposed to take. The Colonial Secretary's demand for reconsideration of some points in the Bill was an open rebuff to the Australian people ; and a flouting of the representations of their delegates.

The appointment of Colonial Judges on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council was intended to strengthen the links between us and the Colonies. No provision, however, was made for the payment of these judges. In his telegram of April 5th, 1900, addressed to the Australian Governors in connection with the Federation Bill, and more particularly with the question of the right of appeal to the Privy Council Mr. Chamberlain announced that Her Majesty's Government "are considering the terms of a Bill for enhancing the dignity and efficiency of the Judicial Committee by practically amalgamating it with the House of Lords and providing for adequate permanent representation of the Great Colonies in a new court which it is proposed to create."

On May 21st Mr. Chamberlain moved the Second Reading of the Federation Bill, and he was able to announce, to the great satisfaction and relief of the House, that the Australian delegates

"have been willing to recognise that we have a duty thrown upon us which we cannot ignore, and they have endeavoured in every possible way to meet our wishes and to prevent any disagreement . . . and so far as the four

delegates [New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania] are concerned I am happy to be able to inform the House that we have come to an absolute agreement."

Telegrams from Queensland and West Australia left no doubt that they preferred the modifications of the points at issue, which were first proposed by the Imperial Government.

"We appreciate," said Mr. Chamberlain, "very much the support of the view which we have expressed. We have not altered those views in the slightest degree. . . . But in accordance with the principles to which we are committed, we cannot interfere where exclusively Australian interests are concerned. We cannot take the side of two Colonies against four. If even yet it were possible to persuade the representatives of the four Colonies to make further concessions, nothing would give greater pleasure to Her Majesty's Government—and we shall be prepared to register their decision whatever it may be."

Clause 74 was to be reversed, the Privy Council, the Court of Appeal for the whole Empire, remaining the final tribunal for all questions, except those of exclusively Australian concern, while the High Court of the Commonwealth assumed final jurisdiction over purely Australian affairs; and the debated question of the Commonwealth's power further to restrict the Right of Appeal was disposed of by the express provision that such restrictive legislation was subject to ratification by the Crown. The Colonial Laws Validity Act will also still apply to the legislative enactments of Australia. The adjustment of the difficulties had been happily worked out in friendly discussion with the delegates, and Mr. Chamberlain concluded his speech by saying:—

"I hope the Bill will be passed unanimously. I firmly believe that in that case, even without such further alteration as Queensland and Western Australia may desire, the House may pass the Bill with the full conviction that in securing the Union of Australia, they have not in any way weakened or impaired the unity of the Empire. We shall

then be able to contemplate the consummation of this great achievement, without the slightest drawback to the pride which we feel in the wisdom and the patriotism of our Australian kinsmen."

Mr. Asquith, rising immediately, accepted on the part of the Opposition the amendments which had been proposed by the Colonial Secretary, and approved of by the Australian delegates, and rejoiced in a settlement which "reflects equal honour on the Colonial Secretary and on the Australian delegates . . . and I accept to the full the two canons laid down by the Colonial Secretary as to the principles which ought to govern the action of this Parliament in a matter of this kind. . . ."

Mr. Asquith's hearty acceptance of the Bill, and his recognition of the spirit in which the Government had suggested modifications in some parts of it, as "trustees of the interests of the Empire," to use Mr. Chamberlain's now historic phrase, was in strong contrast to the tone of the Leader of the Opposition, whose speech at the first reading was not calculated to facilitate agreement between Mr. Chamberlain and the Colonial delegates, or reconcile Australian feeling to amendment of the Bill. The Bill was then read a second time without a division, amid cheers from both sides of the House.

"Many Members of the House," said Mr. Chamberlain, "would be inclined to envy him the privilege of introducing a Bill, which marks an era in the history of Australia, and is a great and important step towards the organisation of the British Empire."

The importance attached to this measure by the Opposition was equally emphasised by Mr. Asquith :—

"This is a measure which, by reason of its intrinsic importance and of the influence which its adoption must exercise on the future of the Empire, transcends in interest and magnitude almost any legislative proposal of our time."



The *Times* regretted that Mr. Chamberlain did not put pressure on the delegates to fall in with the Government view of the necessity for upholding the right of Appeal to the Queen in Council unimpaired, especially as Queensland and West Australia were prepared to support him in this contention.

The general opinion, nevertheless, seemed to be one of relief that a satisfactory compromise had been made without any semblance of a breach of our amicable relations with those Colonies to which we are so deeply indebted. Little or no comment has, however, been made as to the extreme responsibility cast upon the Crown for the final scrutiny of legislative measures.

"The unfortunate difficulty,"<sup>1</sup> said the *Daily Telegraph*, "which had jarred upon the sentiment of the Empire had disappeared. Above all, the new position of Mr. Chamberlain was revealed to the House. It was seen, as if in a flash, that his career has reached an extraordinary height. Stronger and stronger he has emerged from every difficulty during the last three months, until it seems to the House of Commons that he bears the political equivalent of a charmed life."

On June 26th the Bill was read a third time, amid loud cheers from all parts of the House, and passed the House of Lords on the 3rd of July, without amendment. Many congratulatory telegrams were sent to the Colonial Secretary after the Bill received the Royal Assent, and the high importance of the Act was specially signified by calling the Commons to the bar of the House of Lords, to hear the Queen's assent accorded to it, unaccompanied by any

<sup>1</sup> The revised clause which had given so much trouble—the power to restrict the Right of Appeal in cases involving the interpretation of the Australian Constitution Acts and the Federation Act itself—was disposed of by the express provision that Acts of the Commonwealth involving questions of such interpretation, are to be subject to ratification by the Crown.

other Bill. Others which were ready, received the Royal Assent in a batch the next day.

The Act was to come into effect January 1st, 1901, and the Earl of Hopetoun, the first Governor-General, having taken up his residence in the Commonwealth was to make arrangements for the first election and then call together the first Federal Parliament. The Duke of York, by the Queen's gracious permission (contained in an announcement made by the Colonial Office September 18th), would open the first Parliament of the Commonwealth in her name. "Her Majesty fully recognises the greatness of the occasion which will bring her Colonies of Australia into Federal Union, and desires to give this special proof of her interest in all that concerns the welfare of her Australian subjects. Her Majesty at the same time wishes to signify her sense of the loyalty and devotion which have prompted the spontaneous aid so liberally offered by all the colonies in the South African war, and of the splendid gallantry of her Colonial troops."

## CHAPTER XXXII

### *THE CHANCELLOR OF BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY*

MASON SCIENCE COLLEGE—ITS GROWTH—FIRST IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY—MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S WORK IN CONNECTION WITH IT—RECEPTION OF THE CHARTER—MR. CHAMBERLAIN AND HIS CONSTITUENTS—AT A BIRMINGHAM TOWN'S MEETING—LIBERAL-UNIONIST ASSOCIATION MEETING—MAY 1900—BIRMINGHAM.

“RECEIVED too late for classification” is the title, under which are occasionally to be seen, crowded in a corner of a big paper, telegrams or advertisements of varying interest and importance. In a busy life such as Mr. Chamberlain's there is a variety of miscellaneous work which occupies what may be called his spare-corner moments. Considering what the responsibilities of the Colonial Secretary are, that Minister might be excused if he were simply a competent Head of his Department. But Mr. Chamberlain is more than that. He is also President of the Birmingham Liberal-Unionist Association, Chancellor of the new Birmingham University, and the great fighting man of the Treasury Bench, who, when it is known that he is “up,” is always sure of a full house.

The work he has done in connection with the founding of Birmingham University is not work that could be done in “spare moments.” It is the result of arduous, long-sustained effort, and its results are successful beyond expectation.

This Institution, the youngest born of the Universities, in which for the first time in England a Commercial Faculty will be constituted, is the outcome of the Science College founded

by the late Sir Josiah Mason, a Birmingham manufacturer, who began life as a working lad in a pen factory.

In the days when Mr. Chamberlain was living at "Southbourne" in Edgbaston, Sir Josiah Mason, was turning over in his mind the project which has had such great results. He consulted with his medical adviser and friend, the late Dr. J. Gibbs Blake, who gave much of his time and thought to perfecting the scheme for the College, of which he was the first bailiff and one of the two original trustees. Mr. J. G. Johnson, Mr. Bunce, Dr. Heslop and other well-known Birmingham men, worthily carried out Sir Josiah Mason's wishes, with respect to the foundation of a Science College. He had long been impressed with the need of greater knowledge (scientific chiefly) for Birmingham artisans and manufacturers. It is this idea which Mr. Chamberlain has developed in proposing a Commercial Faculty in the new University.

On October 1st, 1880, the Mason Science College was opened, and the staff only numbered four Professors. At present the staff numbers sixty-seven.<sup>1</sup> In 1892 an amalgamation with Queen's College Medical School was effected, and in 1894 the Birmingham Day Training College was incorporated with the Science College. In June 1897 a great step forward was taken when the Mason College University Act became law; it took effect on January 1st, 1898, and from that time the idea of a University for Birmingham has rapidly grown.

On January 13th, 1898, the first meeting of the Court of Governors of Mason College University was held under the Presidency of Mr. Chamberlain. On January 18th, 1900, the last annual meeting of that Court was held under his Presidency. On the first occasion Mr. Chamberlain expounded his ideas of a Birmingham University, the realisation of a long cherished

<sup>1</sup> The Principal, 28 Professors, 1 Assistant-Professor, 23 Lecturers, 3 Assistants, 5 Demonstrators, a Master of Method, a Head-Mistress, and 4 Assistant-Mistresses in the Training Department.

ambition," which should crown the edifice of Birmingham's educational institutions. He then reviewed the enormous educational reforms effected in that city in the last twenty years. A large sum of money would be wanted; they could not start with a starved University.

"With some confidence" he said, "I shall appeal to the local patriotism of Birmingham and the district round it—patriotism which in the past has done so much for us, and which may yet raise us to as great an eminence as a city of learning as we already enjoy as a home of commerce and industry, and as a school for local government and for municipal administration."

Two years later, in January 1900, Mr. Chamberlain had the satisfaction of announcing that the money had been subscribed; not, he was careful to add, all that they wanted, but a substantial instalment of it; there was still need for many guinea and five-guinea subscriptions.

"In Birmingham, I do not hesitate to say there are 50,000 persons who might, without any material sacrifice, give at all events a small sum—a couple or three pounds apiece—to the promotion of this great work, if they felt in it the interest in it which I feel myself, and such a contribution would add at once £100,000 or £150,000 to our endowment. Believe me, we want every penny of it."

"I hold that it is upon the University of Birmingham that falls the responsibility of maintaining the commercial and industrial position of this district.

"I believe we are going to try a great experiment—in one particular we hope we may set an example to all other universities—in the distinctive application of knowledge to science and commerce. These being the views which I believe would be confirmed by every one who studied the question, I do hope a still greater interest will be awakened in our work in the town and district, and that they will give us the means which alone can enable us to carry it out satisfactorily."

Mr. Chamberlain was mainly instrumental in raising the

new endowment fund of over £300,000, for, though generous contributions have been made from past and present students, the sum wanted was so large that there can be no hesitation in saying that it would never have been given, if it had not been for Mr. Chamberlain's personal efforts. He has taken upon himself much of the burden of obtaining the necessary funds, has written and spoken on behalf of the University, and is still doing so ; he has called together influential meetings, and has persuaded his friends and relations to subscribe large sums ; he himself has given £2,000, but money merely does not represent the real value of the support he has afforded the movement. It was through him that two donations of £50,000 were received : one from Mr. Carnegie, the American iron-master ; the other was given anonymously and conditionally, and in order to earn it £300,000 had to be raised by a certain time. But even with these contributions and the original endowment fund of the Mason College, amounting to nearly £250,000, the University is not yet fully equipped. Money has come in well, but more is wanted, if the capabilities of the new institution are to be properly developed.

Mr. Chamberlain has spared much time and thought for the new University, while occupied by peculiarly heavy responsibilities and burdened with many anxieties. As President of the Court of Governors, he has attended the meetings and taken the greatest interest in the details of the scheme. It is often supposed that he is so "cocksure" (as one of his opponents called him) that it makes it difficult for more diffident people to work with him. That is not the opinion of the Governors of the University. One who knows him well, says : "He expresses his opinions very decidedly, which is an advantage, as it clears the way and you know how to proceed ; but his advice is most valuable and is tendered in an extremely pleasant way ; he listens to each suggestion and weighs each proposition most thoroughly."

The royal charter of the University of Birmingham

was granted on March 24th, and on May 31st was received by a special meeting of the Court of the Charter. Governors. Mr. Chamberlain as Chancellor presided. He said :

"The first meeting of the Court of the University of Birmingham happily synchronises with great events abroad (cheers), and I cannot help thinking that I shall fulfil your expectations and wishes if I propose to you that we should send the following message to the Queen at Balmoral: 'The Court of the University of Birmingham, constituted under the charter recently granted by your Majesty, at its first meeting tenders its most hearty and loyal congratulations to your Majesty on the capture of Johannesburg and Pretoria.'" (Cheers.)

The proposal having been agreed to, Mr. Chamberlain called for three cheers for the Queen, and himself led the cheering.

"It is with the most heartfelt satisfaction that I congratulate you on this realisation of a hope and aspiration which have been entertained for half a century by all the best of the citizens of Birmingham, by all the well-wishers of the Midland district. . . . The farther we go and the greater the information we possess, the more gigantic our task appears."

They wanted, first, an examining University; secondly, a teaching University; thirdly, a great School of Research; fourthly, a School of Science in connection with our local industries and manufactures.

"This latter object, this development of the Commercial Faculty, was one which has turned out to be much greater and more responsible than we had anticipated. . . . We are behindhand in the preparation for that great struggle which must come, that commercial competition between nations, in which the weakest will inevitably go to the wall."

And until we were properly equipped for the struggle he would not be satisfied. "All that is wanted is money," he said, amid laughter; "another quarter of a million is the smallest sum" with which he would be content, and his audience smiled with him, foreseeing that that quarter of

a million would be forthcoming if the Chancellor asked for it. "I have never known a persistent appeal made to the people of Birmingham and its neighbourhood to fail of its effect. . . . I confess I know of no way in which money can be bestowed with such certainty of permanent advantage (as for higher education) or with such credit to those who have bestowed it."

The Vice-Chancellor (the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Alderman Beale) then moved a resolution expressing the gratitude of the Governors and of the town to Mr. Chamberlain for his services in connection with the University.

The students who lined the corridors to cheer the new Chancellor were not to be denied a speech. Mr. Chamberlain addressed them as the "first students, and he hoped before long the graduates of the new University." He sounded the tutorial note when reminding them that they must be worthy of their new dignity.

"... We have begun modestly, but our ideas are not modest. . . . We intend that the motto of the University shall be the same as the motto of the Town ['Forward']. . . . I have seen something of other Universities—and as you know I am a much-gowned man, and all that I can say is, that without attempting any invidious comparisons, I hope our University will yield to none. That will depend in a large measure upon you, and upon those who succeed you."

Besides his work for the University, he has done much for other educational institutions, and was particularly  
**Mr. Chamberlain and his Constituents.** interested in the dispute between the Charity Commissioners and the Governors of King Edward VI. Foundation Schools.

It is obvious that the Colonial Secretary cannot devote the time to the municipal life of Birmingham that he did before he became a Minister, when he was personally known to the citizens of all classes. But he still keeps himself informed of all that is going on, and as President of the



Birmingham Liberal-Unionist Association is intimately connected with the chief political organisation of the city. Many Birmingham people, who have never come into personal contact with Mr. Chamberlain, have vivid recollections of him on the platform of the Town Hall at the annual Members' Meetings.

It is difficult to describe a Birmingham Town's Meeting as it used to be, so that it should convey to the reader an adequate impression of the concentrated excitement which was often compressed in some two and a half hours. In the old days, to hear John Bright, R. W. Dale, and Joseph Chamberlain on one evening, was to receive an impression of the power of oratory not likely to be easily forgotten. When the floor of the hall was filled with a seething, swaying mass, listening with the most critical attention, quick to mark each point, quick to resent each interruption, ready with wild applause or with sinister groans of disapproval, the spectators in the gallery participated in an excitement more thrilling than any occasioned by the most sensational scene in a theatre, and they learnt in a single evening what such phrases as "the Power of the People," and the "Power of the Orator" mean.

When Mr. Chamberlain stands up to speak, those of his constituents who are not too busy applauding have a good chance to mark his bearing and to study his face. With a slight smile, with his eyeglass firmly screwed into his eye, erect, one hand on the desk, one hand behind him, he stands waiting, apparently perfectly unmoved ; yet some believe that he derives inspiration from those cheers, and that without them his speeches would be shorn of some of their power. Then he makes some movement, it is difficult to say exactly what ; generally he turns his head and the formal words, " Mr. Chairman," can be read if not heard from his lips ; sometimes he holds up his hand ; occasionally, when he cannot secure silence, he readjusts his eyeglass. But when he fairly begins there is intense quiet, and the audience seems to hold its breath, waiting for the first point, the first chance of an

appreciative cheer, which they are very sure will not be long in coming. It is not easy for a logical speaker to be argumentative and amusing at the same time, but Mr. Chamberlain easily keeps the attention of his audience throughout a long and difficult argument, and they are also certain of more than one hearty laugh before he concludes.

His notes are on small slips of paper laid on the table before him ; these he raises very close to his eyes as he refers to them ; often he speaks with scarcely any reference to them at all. He holds them with his left hand and throughout the speech, gesticulates more or less forcibly with a decided sweep of the right hand, which on one occasion sent his glass of water to cool the reporters toiling below him. Interruptions do not seem to disturb him : they seem rather to afford him a momentary rest and an opportunity for what might be called a little "oratorical business." He manages the malcontents, it must be confessed, with admirable humour and good-nature. Whatever may be his method of dealing with his interruptors in the House of Commons, his way of answering a working-man who cannot reply, and who is perhaps expressing a perfectly honest, not a factious opinion in opposition to the speaker, is conciliatory, if the objection is worth answering ; and is tinged by a little gentle chaff, if the interruption is foolish and uncalled-for.

One sultry July evening he was addressing a crowded meeting in a Board School. The heat was fearful ; even Mr. Chamberlain acknowledged that he felt it. Presently there was a slight disturbance and he paused. An indignant voice came from the back of the room, "We are boiling !"

"My dear sir," he replied sympathetically, "I am extremely sorry, but if it's any consolation to you, I'm roasting !"

"One of the most wonderful exhibitions of power I ever saw," said a Birmingham man, "I saw when Mr. Chamberlain was speaking at Stourbridge. There was a rowdy element in the meeting, and it was intended that there should be a disturbance. For the first forty minutes he was constantly



Photo by]

J. Thackeray Bunce, late Editor of  
the *Birmingham Post*

[Reinhold, Thiele, & Co.

Mrs. Chamberlain.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN ADDRESSING HIS CONSTITUENTS IN THE  
TOWN HALL, BIRMINGHAM.



interrupted. Then he turned his attention to those men ; he simply talked to them for twenty minutes, for the last forty minutes there was absolute silence, and at the end the meeting cheered him like mad. I never saw anything like it. It was power pure and simple—sheer power.”

As the political chief (President) of the Birmingham Liberal-  
 As a Political Chief. Unionists, Mr. Chamberlain of course takes part in the work of the Association and attends Committee Meetings. “He is,” says the same speaker, “always most courteous, though decided. Every one in Committee gets on excellently with him. The general opinion of him, as a man who would crush anything or anybody who stands in his way, is in my opinion, quite wrong. He makes up his mind carefully ; he does not speak till he has decided, and then he is prepared to defend his views. But I have not found him unwilling to give due weight to the views of others.”

Mr. Chamberlain made an interesting reference to the effect of Home Rule, in creating a new political party in Birmingham life, in his Leicester speech (November 1899).

“We took account of the deep political sentiment which made it difficult for a man, who all his life had been called a Liberal or Radical, who had been proud of his party, to enrol under a new flag and to be the friend of men whom, up to that time, he had looked upon as his bitterest enemies. . . We encouraged such men to preserve the name of Liberal, and induced them to accept the Unionist party. . . and to work with the Conservatives as with loyal allies. . . . The Liberal had, as it were, retained his old principles, while giving them a new application.”

At Glasgow (1897) he spoke of his experience as Parliamentary Candidate in a democratic constituency.

“The democracy as a rule is interested and sentimental (Laughter) ; I am speaking in all seriousness. The people who act according to their mean petty interests, are the people who to-day are voting against the Government, because their dogs have been muzzled. . . people who, upon inter-

national concerns of the highest importance, agree with the Government.

"But the democracy will never do that. You prove to the democracy that there is something to be done, which calls for the greatest sacrifices from them, but which is just and right to do, and you will probably carry the democracy with you. . . . It is the business of a leader to lead ; it is the business of a leader to educate his party, but to do so sympathetically, not to do so with contempt shown in every line of his intelligent countenance. That is not the way either to convince or to carry an audience with you.

"I can say for myself that, though I have never hesitated to say what I have thought to be right, and to say it in terms which are not very difficult for any one to understand, yet I have been able to keep my hold on the most democratic constituency in the most democratic town in the kingdom, and to come out on each occasion, when a contest had been fought, with a gigantic majority, in a constituency in which there is hardly one rich man, and in which the great majority are men working with their hands. . . . So long as we can point to such cases as these [Birmingham and Wolverhampton] we cannot complain of the ingratitude of the democracy."

After the General Election of 1886, when party ties had been broken and friend had voted against friend, he agreed to meet some of the Birmingham Liberals, in order that their points of difference on Home Rule might be explained in a friendly manner. It was a most interesting discussion, and Mr. Chamberlain at the close laid aside some of his usual reserve, and pleaded that these political differences should not be allowed to sever the bonds of friendship, which had so long bound them together in Birmingham. The proceedings were private, and what he said was meant only for the ear of his friends and constituents, though his suggestion as to a Round Table Conference was afterwards carried out.

"Well, gentlemen, whatever may be the issue of the appeal I make, or of the present situation, I hope that here at least we may preserve our old friendships. I hope that we may

at least speak of one another and think of one another with mutual respect. . . .

"To me, my position in Birmingham, and in this division, ~~Affection for~~ has been, as I have often said, a peculiar and ~~Birmingham~~ exceptional one. My life is bound up in Birmingham; all its institutions, its prosperity, its politics, have been my care and principal thought for the whole course of my public life. I know its people. Your faces, if not your names, are familiar to me. As I walk through the streets I seem to gather instinctively the minds of the people. And, I say that, to me there is no position to which I can attain, there is no triumph which can come to me, there is no success which I can possibly hope for, that would in any degree compensate me for the loss of the respect—ay, and of the affection—that has hitherto been shown me."

When he met his constituents in 1900 his welcome was designedly more enthusiastic than usual; it was intended to mark their approval of his South African policy, which he explained at full length.

Mrs. Chamberlain was absent from the meeting, owing to the death of her father, and without moving any formal resolution on the subject the speakers expressed the feeling not only of the meeting, but of the town, in offering her their sincere sympathy in her bereavement—a sympathy which Mrs. Chamberlain very greatly appreciated.

Mr. Chamberlain, who showed traces of his recent illness—he had been suffering from an attack of influenza—said, in reply to the resolution re-appointing him President of the Association:—

"I feel very deeply the kind words which have been uttered by the mover and seconder of this resolution, and which have expressed their sense, and your sense, of the loss which my wife has lately sustained. This is the first time she has been absent, since our marriage, from any of these great meetings, and I know that it is a sorrow to her not to be present. It would have been more congenial to me to avoid all public appearances at this time, but Mr. Endicott was, perhaps more than any other man I have ever known,

imbued with the sense that all private feeling should give way to public duty. I feel sure I am best honouring his memory in keeping those public engagements which I have made. . . . I am sure you know that I feel it in a special sense a pleasure and a privilege to attend these annual gatherings. On these occasions I speak to the friends of a lifetime—who have never failed me in good report or evil report—who have stood by me in all the vicissitudes of a not uneventful political career (Voice, 'Always will'), and I hope I am not presuming when I say that I count once more on receiving from my own people a cordial appreciation of my motives and intentions, and the hearty support which has encouraged and strengthened me so often in difficult times which are past."

Parliament was dissolved on September 25th, 1900, and Mr. Chamberlain once again appealed to the constituents he had represented for so long. He had, indeed, already entered upon his twenty-fifth year as Member of Parliament for Birmingham. The new Parliament was to assemble on November 1st.



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### *MR. CHAMBERLAIN AT WORK*

THE UNIONIST ALLIANCE—ITS PERMANENCE—RELATIONS WITH  
MR. BALFOUR—LORD SALISBURY AND MR. GLADSTONE—A DAY  
AT THE COLONIAL OFFICE.

WHETHER Mr. Chamberlain would ever return to his old allies has been frequently asked since 1886. Many at first feared that an Alliance between Liberal-  
**The Unionist Alliance.** Unionists and Conservatives was the crying of "Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace"; the Gladstonians naturally desired war and the consequent ruin of the coalition; and when the danger which united Liberals and Conservatives should have passed, they expected the party to fall asunder through lack of a common interest. But a common danger still unites the two sections of the present Government, the fear of that disintegrating legislation which may yet be attempted by a combination of Liberals and Nationalists.

And a second and more permanent bond of union is to be found in the wish of both sections of the Unionist Party for progressive domestic legislation. Former Liberals have found that to "progress" is not solely a Liberal virtue; Conservatives (to the astonishment of some of them), that to make the people more powerful and more contented does not necessarily make their rulers either less powerful or less prosperous.

A third reason for the continuance of the alliance is that the Government has been industrious and business-like;

it did not compile a fancy programme, but has steadily worked through a number of useful legislative measures. When men of differing opinions are earnestly engaged upon a piece of necessary work they are apt to think less of theoretic difference than of practical agreement. To waste time in talking generates friction and discord ; to spend time in work induces a feeling of satisfaction with oneself and with one's fellow-workers.

When Lord Hartington became the Duke of Devonshire, (December 1891) the leadership of the Liberal-Unionist Party in the House of Commons fell to Mr. Chamberlain. There was a continual battle between him and his old colleagues, including personal friends of many years, such for example as Mr. Morley ; the Home Rule contest also, for a time, was almost of the nature of a duel between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Gladstone. During these first years of the Unionist coalition a foundation of mutual respect between the allies was laid, for Mr. Chamberlain bore himself well in a trying position, and the first piece of work he undertook after leaving Mr. Gladstone's Government (the mission to America, 1887) was a signal success.

The relations between Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Salisbury personally are of the pleasantest and most cordial character, and the long-expected, often-prophesied rupture between the Prime Minister and his formidable ally has never taken place. There have always been for some people figure-heads in English History, and as Bright stands for political honesty, Wellington for political obstinacy, so Mr. Chamberlain serves them as an admirable study for political ambition. Such people do not understand that ambition may mean making a complete success of the particular work in hand, rather than throwing it aside for other work which may be considered as more important.

“ It is the ordinary course of party politics,” said Mr. Chamberlain at Leicester, “ that one party should find to be wrong everything that the other party proposes, and when a question does not affect the interest

Relations  
with his  
Colleagues.

November  
1899.

of the Empire, perhaps that is a satisfactory principle on which a country may be governed. At all events it ensures criticism on everything that is proposed. Following this principle we used to say hard things of one another, we, who are all friends. . . .”

“Lord Salisbury called me ‘Jack Cade,’ but I always said I thought Jack Cade was a much misunderstood person. But let that pass. I have said many disagreeable things about Lord Salisbury. But nothing that he said of me, and nothing that I ever said of him, ever prevented our co-operating cordially upon what, fortunately, we were both able to believe was for the interests of the nation. When we came together to look at the merits of some of those propositions, which otherwise might have been the subject of party criticism, we found that upon the merits we were entirely agreed.”

There were those who said that Lord Salisbury would find a difficulty in placing Mr. Chamberlain in his new administration, and they were not backward in surmising that the offer of the Colonial Secretaryship showed that Lord Salisbury was not going to give his new ally anything that he could help.

Still more ill-natured were the prophecies of what would happen when Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour tried to work together: the two men were so diametrically opposite. Mr. Balfour was popularly supposed to be an aristocrat of the aristocrats, taking a philosophical rather than a practical view and unwilling to consider the expediency of a policy; Mr. Chamberlain, a man attaching little importance to class distinctions, practical before everything, demanding that the Unionist Policy should bear the stamp of actual as well as theoretical expediency. Yet different in method and manner as these two politicians are, their alliance has stood the wear and tear of fourteen years of considerable strain, and Mr. Balfour is now one of Mr. Chamberlain's firmest and most intimate political allies as well as a personal friend. Mr. Balfour's generous replies to the recent personal attacks on Mr. Chamberlain in the House, have sufficiently demon-

strated the soundness of the friendship that exists between the First Lord of the Treasury and the leader of the Liberal-Unionist party in the House of Commons.

It is doubtful if there is another man who, in the early days of the coalition, could have held the party together, with the maximum of effectiveness and the minimum of friction achieved by Mr. Balfour. To be conciliatory was as easy to him, as to be firm is to Mr. Chamberlain. In the fusion of the two parties, whose origin and up-bringing were diametrically opposite, a spirit of conciliation in details and of firmness in principles was above all things essential. A political combination of two such men as Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour has in it elements of immense strength, and its influence in the House of Commons must be extraordinary, giving to the Government the two keenest debaters and two of the most powerful speakers in the House.

Mr. Chamberlain's chief political opponents are Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Morley, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and Lord Rosebery. In the cases of Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Morley, the personal friendship which, though no longer based on political agreement, is still firm, makes the political enmity more interesting.

If Home Rule could be eliminated from politics it would probably be found that Lord Rosebery was nearer to Mr. Chamberlain than any other man on the Liberal side. The political differences between the two seem more those of circumstance than of principle. Both are Imperialists; both believe in the democracy; both speak what is in their mind with equal plainness, without considering whether it will please their party, and neither is afraid to point out when his party is wrong.

Lord Rosebery once said at Birmingham of Mr. Chamberlain: "No one admires Mr. Chamberlain's abilities more than I do, no one admires his unequalled powers in debate, his power of invective and his power of eulogy (I think he prefers the invective), and no one recognises more



*Photo by*

*[Draycott]*

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S PRIVATE ROOM AT THE COLONIAL OFFICE.  
Taken for this book by special permission of Mr. Chamberlain.



warmly than I do the great municipal services he has rendered to Birmingham. . . . If you could only put his head straight [on Home Rule] he would be the horse for my money."

The tie between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain, of a different and more formal character than that which bound the latter to the rest of his colleagues, was, of course, broken in the intensity of the Home Rule struggle. But it is a satisfaction to know that by a pleasant and characteristic action on the part of both, kindly relations were once more resumed before Mr. Gladstone's death. After the aged Premier had retired from public life, Mr. Chamberlain inquired if he would like to see him again. A most cordial answer was returned by Mr. Gladstone and the ex-member of the Liberal Cabinet lunched with his former chief, with whom he had a long and interesting conversation ; and as if to show his kindly feeling Mr. Gladstone did not eschew politics, but led the conversation in that direction, and discoursed with frankness and animation on the political situation. Whether the future of Home Rule was touched upon or not, it is interesting to know of such a meeting between the leaders of the two parties, once so far estranged.

"I am convinced," said Mr. Gladstone in 1896, speaking of the late Lord Derby, "that acceptance of office is apt to be less sharply criticised than resignation ; the motives which induce a man to resign are more severely scrutinised than those which induce a man to accept." And now that he himself had resigned office he may have more fully appreciated the significance of his own words.

In attempting something like a review of Mr. Chamberlain's position as a politician and as a man, it is natural to look chiefly at his Colonial work. But as this work is not finished, and as its results will be far-reaching, and extend over many years, no complete estimate can yet be formed of its worth. If genius consists in seizing opportunity, it was certainly a stroke of genius

Meeting  
with Mr.  
Gladstone.

Work at  
the Colonial  
Office.

for Mr. Chamberlain to choose the Colonial Secretaryship, a post which brought him the greatest opportunity of his life. So clearly has he shown the immense importance of that office that in the future it will be reserved for the strongest and best among our statesmen. Never again, with the people's consent, will vital issues affecting our Colonies be entrusted to the keeping of administrative mediocrity. The Colonial Secretary guides the fortunes of an Empire within an Empire; for the fortunes of the Colonies cannot be dissociated from those of the Mother Country.

In his choice of Colonial Governors, in his dealings with Colonial Premiers and with officials, both great and small, Mr. Chamberlain has been peculiarly happy. The Bechuanaland chieftain, Khama, in a felicitous moment named him "The man who puts things straight!"

How great the physical and mental strain of Mr. Chamberlain's position is, can only be fully known to himself, but it may be surmised from the following glance at a day's work at the Colonial Office.

Mr. Chamberlain works in a large room looking out on the great quadrangle, round which are built the Foreign, Colonial, Home, and India Offices. He sits at a desk placed at the farther end of the room, and when a visitor comes to see him, the considerable distance to be traversed before the usual handshake can take place is a little awkward for both parties. However it affords an excellent opportunity for preliminary observation. All sorts of concerns are dealt with in this room. The great questions raised at the conference of Colonial Premiers, the more recent deliberations concerning Australian Federation, Imperial Federation, once a fair dream only, now likely to become a great reality, the pretended mission of "The Messrs. Ansah" (fraudulent envoys of King Prempeh), the concerns of the Bechuanaland chieftains, Khama, Bathoen, and Sebele (loyal and devoted Christian subjects of Her Majesty), the huge schemes of Mr. Rhodes, and the small concerns of the tiniest island belonging to the Empire, have all been discussed in this room.



There is something romantic about the Colonial Office, from the theoretical if not from the practical point of view. It symbolises growth and power ; the expansion of a mighty empire, an empire won not so much by the conquest of great armies, as by the activity, energy, and restlessness of individual Englishmen who have spread themselves over the face of the globe.

In the room adjoining Mr. Chamberlain's, sit his private secretaries, who are ready, if summoned by the electric signal, to take in papers to the Colonial Secretary, and who deal with those relating to patronage and personal communications. The latter, unless anonymous or simply abusive, are always brought before Mr. Chamberlain, who occasionally answers them himself. They include much correspondence of all sorts, which has nothing to do with the Colonies : there are many disappointed contributors to provincial newspapers who send their articles to the Colonial Secretary to read ; there are numerous requests for autographs, stamps, and even money ; there are complaints from people who attribute every ill to the Government, and think it can remedy every wrong, and constant suggestions from ingenious men and women (in all stages of sanity), who usually have a remarkably short way of dealing with political difficulties. All this private correspondence is kept according to its importance, but it does not all remain on record permanently.

The official papers are dealt with by the permanent staff of the Office ; but the private secretaries find themselves fully occupied, for, in addition to patronage questions, the correspondence committed to their charge entails a great deal of personal work and interviews with all sorts of people all day long.

The official papers with which the Colonial Secretary has to deal are of the most varied character ; there have been Secretaries of State who have left the bulk of the work to the permanent staff, and have been satisfied to inform themselves cursorily of the contents of the papers submitted to them for signature. But that is not Mr. Chamberlain's way.

When looking round his room and seeing the innumerable piles of papers, the pouches and boxes filled to overflowing, the long Despatches, with minutes advising as to the action to be taken and full notes and comments, all of which must be carefully considered before the final reply is given to Despatches, which vary in importance from one on irrigation in Cyprus to those relating to negotiations on which depends the peace of South Africa ; and when remembering that all receive minute and careful attention, it is easy to realise that Mr. Secretary Chamberlain must needs be a hard worker, a man of method, quick to see, quick to decide, quick to act. When he leaves the Colonial Office his Departmental work is not finished. The papers follow him to the House of Commons, labelled with slips of different colours, red, green, or white according to their urgency. At midnight, when he goes home, he finds them at his private house, and even when he is away from London they arrive with regularity by post or messenger. In fact, he could not escape from them unless he were to disappear altogether.

It must be admitted that with all this responsibility on his shoulders, with his Parliamentary duties, his political engagements, and his private affairs (for even a Minister has private affairs to attend to), Mr. Chamberlain is a very busy man. He could only get through his work by habits of industry, rapidity, and method. Each piece of business is considered by a mind accustomed to concentration and to swift movement from one subject to another. Nothing is left over from day to day, but each day's work is finished within the working day, however late he must sit up to finish it (and often he does not reach home from the House till two a.m.). A glance at his room in the Colonial Office will reveal part of the secret of his power of getting through his work. There is nothing superfluous, nothing out of place, and every morning when he comes to business his desk is absolutely clear. There is not a single paper lying about.

The work of the Colonial Department, which is infinitely

greater now than ever before, was never so quickly or so promptly despatched ; the accommodation and the staff have had to be increased more than once since Mr. Chamberlain's accession to Office.

Though arduous, the work is also extremely interesting, more particularly since South African affairs have loomed so large before the public. The Colonial Secretary's enthusiasm inspires his subordinates and they are more than willing to undertake extra work when necessary to help him. He has a keen eye for good work, and he rarely fails to remember the man who shows ability, whether he be a great man out in a colony or a subordinate in the office in Downing Street. It can safely be said that he takes greater interest in his staff than is usually expected of the head of a Department of State, and the just and considerate spirit which contributed to the pleasant relations in the old days between the Mayor of Birmingham and the Corporation officials, still governs the relations between the Colonial Secretary and his staff.

Mr. Chamberlain attaches great value to the sentiment of loyalty. The enthusiastic outburst of patriotic feeling which began with the Diamond Jubilee and culminated in the offers of help from the Colonies in the Boer war, was much prized by him, and it is scarcely too much to say that he has done something to inspire this enthusiasm. One incident may be related in this connection showing the Colonial Secretary in something other than a coldly official light.

One morning, among his private correspondence, he found a letter from a sturdy Canadian settler, living in the wilds of Manitoba, who wanted to show his loyalty to the old country. Could he have a bit of bunting—an old Union Jack—there must be some lying about at the Admiralty? If he could, he would run it up on high days and holidays to celebrate his connection with England. The letter greatly pleased Mr. Chamberlain and he did more than the old man had even hoped for. A fine bran new flag went out from

the Admiralty to the Canadian farmer, who wrote back a letter full of gratitude, saying that as soon as the snows were gone he was going to rig up a giant flagstaff that would be seen for miles round when he ran up his splendid new Union Jack.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### *MR. CHAMBERLAIN AT HOME LONDON AND HIGHBURY*

LIFE IN LONDON—THE TOWN HOUSE—A DAY'S WORK—MRS. CHAMBERLAIN'S WORK—LIFE AT HIGHBURY—THE HOUSE—VISITORS—THE FARM, GARDENS, RECREATIONS, HOLIDAYS—A DAY AT HIGHBURY.

**M**R. CHAMBERLAIN has two homes, one in Prince's Gardens, the other at Highbury, and his life is naturally very different at the two places. Life in London is full, engrossing, hurried; life at Highbury is quieter and simpler, though even there much work persistently follows him, from which the Secretary of State of a great Department, and one of the leaders of a powerful political party in the House of Commons cannot escape.

When Mr. Chamberlain first entered Parliament he occupied rooms in London, but on accepting office under Mr. Gladstone he moved to the house in Prince's Gardens in which he now lives. In summer, when the trees in the square garden are in leaf, the outlook is green and peaceful; the house is close to Hyde Park. In the dining-room is a fine picture—Lord Leighton's "Greek Girls"—and one may also see a signed portrait of Her Majesty, with an inscription in her own hand, presented to Mr. Chamberlain on his return from America after he had completed the Fisheries negotiations in 1887.

In the drawing-room there is always an abundance of

beautiful flowers, which are sent up from Highbury twice a week ; two "button-holes" for the Colonial Secretary are sent every day.

His life during the session is very much of a routine. At breakfast he looks over letters and newspapers (not omitting those of Birmingham). About eleven o'clock he drives down to the Colonial Office and transacts his business there, lunching in his room or at his club (the Athenæum or Devonshire).

With very rare exceptions, he and his son Austen are at the House every afternoon and evening (excepting Wednesday and Saturday). On these days Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain can either entertain or accept invitations ; both of them are fond of society, and Mr. Chamberlain keenly enjoys an evening at the theatre. He was at one time, as has been already said, an unusually good amateur actor, and has written more than one piece which has been acted by his friends.

For music he does not care, and the Chamberlains are not a musical family ; but in literature, art, the drama, and in scientific discoveries he is much interested. He is a F.R.S., a distinction conferred for his aid to science given officially. His honorary degrees are those of LL.D. Cambridge (1892), D.C.L. Oxford, (1896), LL.D. Glasgow (1897), and LL.D. Dublin (1899).

When Mr. Chamberlain's official duties are finished there **Some Official Duties.** are the semi-official ones to be discharged, such as presiding at meetings, dinners, and the opening ceremonies of various institutions, and speeches are expected on every occasion. Nor can one be made without considerable responsibility, for the simplest sentence is often supposed to bear some hidden political significance ; even a joke is not always a joke, pure and simple, if made by the Colonial Secretary. In 1900 he was asked to preside at a luncheon given by the Wesleyan body in London ; some man of note in the political world had been their guest on each previous annual occasion ; the year before

Mr. Neville Chamberlain. Mr. Austen Chamberlain. Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain.



*Photo by]*

Miss H. Chamberlain.

Mrs. Chamberlain.

*[Draycott.]*

A FAMILY GROUP AT HIGHBURY.

Specially taken for this book.





it was Mr. Asquith. But Mr. Chamberlain is dangerous, and in spite of the generous tribute he has recently paid to the services of Wesleyans throughout the Colonies, a section of that body saw in his presence at the luncheon some insidious political meaning, and objected to it in such a manner that the would-be hosts were forced into the ignominious position of asking him to withdraw his acceptance; a course which was received with indignant protest by Wesleyans generally, and by those in Birmingham (represented by Mr. Ebenezer Parkes, M.P.) in particular.

Mrs. Chamberlain is an active member of the Committee of the Colonial Nursing Association, and, for the *North American Review* for April 1900, wrote an article on "An Obligation of Empire," dealing with this work. She explains the origin and working of the English institution and urges its great importance, suggesting that it is a subject which will in the future concern Americans as well as English. In 1899 she issued an appeal, through letters in the papers, for funds for this association. As an American, Mrs. Chamberlain took a great interest in the fitting out of the hospital-ship, *The Maine*, generously given for the use of our soldiers by Americans, both in England and at home. It will also be remembered that at the launch of the *Venerable* last year, she christened the ship. More than once she has taken part in the celebration of Christmas at the General Hospital, Birmingham, by distributing the presents from the Christmas trees to the convalescent patients, afterwards visiting those who were too ill to leave the wards, with a kindly word and a cheering smile for each. Unlike the wives of many political men, Mrs. Chamberlain never speaks in public or takes an active part in political work.

When, in 1880, Mr. Chamberlain built Highbury at Moor Green, some surprise was felt that he did not choose a more beautiful suburb of Birmingham, or buy one of the old country seats, of which many charming examples are to be found in Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

But in this, as in more important matters, Mr. Chamberlain chose to identify himself with Birmingham. He had both friends and relatives living in the district of Moor Green, and the Hall, where his father and mother died, and where his brother Arthur now lives, is close to his gates. The view from the grounds at Highbury has changed (as indeed Mr. Chamberlain was warned that it would) since he went there; now there are suggestions of tall chimneys and of the small red houses of King's Heath to be seen from the terrace. Yet nevertheless there is a certain quiet charm and freshness about the place; it is carefully laid out in a manner which conceals art, and all its natural advantages were made the most of by the late Mr. Milner, the landscape gardener, who also arranged the gardens at Southbourne, Mr. Chamberlain's home during his mayoralty.

The grounds of Highbury are not infrequently thrown open; when the local flower-show is held there the villagers and townsfolk stroll through the shrubberies, watch the athletic sports in the meadows, or inspect the rare plants in the long range of glass-houses. These are built on one side of a corridor which is gay with every kind of beautiful creeper, and which communicates with the large conservatory opening out of the drawing-room.

The house is thickly covered with ivy and other creepers. The garden slopes to the valley below, and most of the windows face south and west. The entrance hall and Mr. Chamberlain's library are perhaps the two most interesting features of the house.

The library is fitted with the fine oak ceiling and panelling designed by the architect (the late Mr. J. H. Chamberlain), but the ample shelving no longer suffices for the innumerable books which are now overflowing into other rooms. Behind Mr. Chamberlain's writing-table, which stands at one end near the fireplace, are a collection of novels, French and English, and the books which the Colonial Secretary constantly uses. Thackeray is perhaps Mr. Chamberlain's favourite novelist, though he is also an admirer of Dickens,

and a romance or story of adventure, ancient or modern, are welcome when he has time for relaxation. As a young man the works of the Continental philosophers and socialists, Rousseau, Comte, Karl Marx, were much studied by him, and his acquaintance with French and English literature is extensive. It is interesting to speculate upon the position in literature which Mr. Chamberlain might have made for himself, if he had not been absorbed by politics; his articles on social and political subjects are especially distinguished for clearness and force.

On the mantel-shelf of the library is a fine portrait of Mr. Gladstone; and on the writing-table a portrait of Mrs. Chamberlain before her marriage.

There are many interesting things to be seen at Highbury; among them the addresses presented to Mr. Chamberlain and his wife on the occasion of their marriage, the freedom of the Borough of Birmingham and of the City of Glasgow, with the silver caskets in which they were enclosed; in the corridor leading to the garden, hangs the document which appointed Mr. Chamberlain as Plenipotentiary, sealed with the Great Seal; here, too, is the pen with which the treaty at Washington was signed by the Plenipotentiaries after the conclusion of the fisheries negotiations, and a portrait of "Dr. Chamberlain" in his robes as Lord Rector of Glasgow.

In one corner of the big hall is the American flag. The splendid kaross of leopard skins was given to Mrs. Chamberlain by Khama after his visit to Highbury; a favourite collie dog is named after the African chief. A large map of the seat of war, with the contending forces indicated by a number of flags, occupied a prominent position in the hall. In the gallery above, out of which most of the rooms open, are two portraits, one of Mrs. Chamberlain by Millais, which, charming as it is, hardly does justice to her look of vivacity and youth; the other of Mr. Chamberlain by Sargent, the American painter. This picture was given to his wife by Mr. Chamberlain. Beside Mrs. Chamberlain's portrait hangs that of her ancestor, stern

old John Endicott ; the original painting is in the possession of Mrs. Chamberlain's family.

One of the most interesting and amusing books in the house is Mr. Chamberlain's collection of cartoons. They date from the time of his contesting Sheffield in 1874, and are of all kinds, and from all sorts of papers, many from local prints ; it is noticeable, however, that not until some time after he had been Mayor of Birmingham did the cartoonists catch any real likeness—the eyeglass together with a spare, clean-shaven face was considered a sufficient indication of whom they meant. When the artist from *Vanity Fair* came down to Birmingham to caricature the new M.P., Mr. Chamberlain invited him to "Southbourne" ; he also paid a visit to the Arts Club, and in the smoking-room, while his host was telling some capital stories, the caricaturist was watching his face with intent to seize its chief characteristic, and his efforts eventually resulted in an excellent cartoon which appeared in 1876.

When Mr. Chamberlain goes to Highbury he likes to get as much away from his official duties as possible, but it is sometimes necessary to grant interviews and receive deputations there. Still, on the whole, though large entertainments are given at times, life at Highbury is quiet and uneventful. Its chief drawback is that it can rarely be enjoyed for any length of time consecutively, even the autumn recess being broken up by speeches in many places, visits to London for Cabinet Councils, and official work.

Visitors to Highbury of course include public men ;

**Visitors.** Mr. Morley, the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Arthur

and Mr. Gerald Balfour and—in earlier days—Lord Rosebery, Sir William Harcourt, John Bright, Sir G. Trevelyan, Earl Spencer, and the late Earl of Selborne, were among the politicians entertained at Mr. Chamberlain's country house.

Mrs. Chamberlain's American relatives and friends are often in England, and naturally they are much interested and very welcome in her home at Highbury. Her father

and Mrs. Endicott have been present at several town's meetings and heard Mr. Chamberlain's public speeches as well as those delivered in the House. And in the old Peabody mansion at Danvers, Mass., Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain have often spent a part of the Colonial Secretary's short holidays. It is only when he leaves

**Holidays.**

England, either for a visit to America, or on some other tour, that he has any real time of leisure, though even then important business follows him by cable or despatch.

When official and social duties will permit of it, Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain often go home from Saturday to Monday during the months of the session.

One day at Highbury is much like another. Mr. Chamberlain breakfasts with the family, and then takes a turn in the garden and orchid houses. During the morning he sees his secretary and despatches business; after lunch, unless driving into Birmingham or entertaining guests, he usually devotes more time to the garden or hot-houses. Though not caring for the manual labour of gardening, such as potting and pruning, which many enthusiasts enjoy, he generally likes to superintend the planting of shrubs, the laying out of beds, the arrangement of the houses. He knows much of plants, his knowledge not being restricted to orchids. He has often called the attention of the working classes to the hobby of gardening, as one of the purest, healthiest, and least costly in which a man can indulge. An exception must of course be made in the case of an orchid-collector, whose hobby cannot be called inexpensive. When Mr. Chamberlain is in London, one of the very few real recreations he permits himself is to visit (often on a Saturday afternoon) the Botanical Gardens at Kew, where the gardeners are sure to show him any addition to, or any curiosity among, their treasures.

At Highbury there is a small dairy farm, which supplies the house and is managed by Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who takes a keen interest in both the practical and the scientific

aspects of farming ; he pays great attention to the quality of his livestock, and uses the newest and most approved dairy methods. This farm is naturally also a source of interest to Mr. Chamberlain, who, while occupied with matters relating to farm, garden, and hot-houses, cannot be said to have no recreation or to take no exercise, though he refrains from all kinds of games and from sport.

When abroad and on a holiday, if in good health, Mr. Chamberlain is by no means averse from walking or even climbing, and as has been said, he is a good swimmer. Certainly, his indoor recreation is chiefly confined to reading, for he cares nothing for billiards, cards, or chess.

His life at home is divided between his family, his work, and his garden, and it was truly said of him : " Mr. Chamberlain's real recreation may be said to be his family."

## CHAPTER XXXV

### *THE REAL MR. CHAMBERLAIN*

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S FAMILY—SOME REASONS FOR MISAPPREHENSION OF HIS CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S private life, apart from the severe bereavements which he suffered during his early years of public service, has been singularly devoid of care and anxiety. He has numerous relatives and friends, most of them grouped in or near Birmingham. Of his four brothers, Richard, who was best known, has already been alluded to as one of the kindest and most popular Mayors of that city. His early death in March 1898, after a short political career, was a great grief to Mr. Chamberlain who was deeply attached to him. In Sir Edward Russell's "Reminiscences," there is a passage in which he says :—

"Sad indeed it is to think of his early death ; he was a true and loyal fellow. All the Chamberlains are distinguished by a passion of kinship, and curiously enough those who, being unrelated, are officially attached to the fortunes of the Colonial Secretary have in their friendship for him a great deal of the affectionate spirit by which the Chamberlains in their clannishness are characterised."

This passage was written by one of Mr. Chamberlain's political opponents.

The second brother, Arthur Chamberlain, lives at Moor Green Hall. He married a sister of Mr. Chamberlain's

second wife and has a large family of daughters and two sons. He is a director of the firm of Messrs. Kynoch and Co., a magistrate, and a particularly active worker in all matters relating to the licensing powers of the Justices. He has been elected Chairman of the Advisory Committee of Birmingham University which was appointed to report on the best manner of employing the funds promised for scientific and commercial training, and of making the new Commercial Faculty a success. He was for a short time in the Town Council, during the time in which his brother proposed his municipal reforms.

The two younger brothers, Herbert and Walter, spent much of their time on their retirement from business in travelling; an island in the South Seas once belonged to them, but they have now no property there. They both married Canadian ladies, and Mrs. Herbert Chamberlain takes a considerable interest in politics, having been at one time President of the Birmingham Women's Liberal-Unionist Association; she and her husband now live in London, and Mr. and Mrs. Walter Chamberlain near Ledbury, Herefordshire.

Mr. Chamberlain has three sisters, all of whom live in Birmingham; Mary, the eldest, wife of the Right Hon. William Kenrick, takes an active interest in the philanthropic and educational work of the town.

Of Mr. Chamberlain's children, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who has held the post of Civil Lord of the Admiralty, is the best known. He is the elder son and is unmarried. He shares the family life at Prince's Gardens and at Highbury. It is not unworthy of notice, as showing the strong tie between father and son, that the latter has preferred to remain an inmate of his father's house, rather than (as so many men of his age and standing have done) set up his own establishment and lead a life apart from that of his family. His entry into Parliament and his services as Junior Whip to the Liberal-Unionists have been previously referred to.





*Photo by]*

*[Draycott.*

THE RIGHT HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN IN THE ORCHID HOUSE.

From a photograph taken for this book in August 1900.



Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary's second son, lives at Highbury. He was educated at Rugby and spent some time at the Mason Science College. Later he went out to the Bahamas to manage his father's property, and lived abroad for several years. Perhaps Mr. Chamberlain's exceptional interest in the affairs of small colonies, has been quickened by the connection of his son with colonial life.

On returning to England, Mr. Neville Chamberlain engaged in business in Birmingham. He has already begun to take part in the public life and service of the city, though, so far, he has shown no inclination to enter political life as member for a constituency. At present he is one of the hon. secretaries of the Birmingham Liberal-Unionist Association and occasionally speaks at political meetings. He also takes a considerable interest in physical training and in the Birmingham Athletic Institute. Together with his uncle, Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, he is now working on the Advisory Committee before mentioned, in connection with Birmingham University.

If it is a difficult task to give a sketch of Mr. Chamberlain's career, or an account of his work, that shall not at  
**Mr. Chamberlain as a Friend.** once arouse contention, it is far more difficult to attempt any general summary of his character and personality, as to which there is, perhaps, more difference of opinion than in the case of any other statesman.

Undoubtedly he is extremely reserved, and few men have seen him lay his reserve aside; but there have been occasions when the depth of feeling which lies behind it has been unmistakably shown. By the sudden death of George Dawson, J. S. Wright, and John Henry Chamberlain, Mr. Chamberlain lost three friends with whom he had long worked, and who were intimately connected with his life in Birmingham. When paying a heartfelt tribute to the public services of Mr. J. H. Chamberlain, not only in the kindly words, but in the troubled face and unsteady voice, his regret and affection were plainly seen. When,

in March 1895, another friend, Dr. R. W. Dale died, Mr. Chamberlain telegraphed at once to express his wish to attend the funeral, and many of the congregation remember him sitting silent and sad, as the last tribute was paid to the comrade who had stood beside him in many a hard fight, and had tendered him strong sympathy and true comprehension when the cloud of misunderstanding was about him.

Further, the strong feelings of affection entertained for Mr. Chamberlain by his family and friends altogether belie the stern character which is so often attributed to him, by those who see in him only the politician—a British Napoleon, willing to sacrifice every one to attain the gratification of his ambition, which they imagine to be self-aggrandisement. And though a different view is taken by those who come into close political contact with him, there is yet abroad an idea that Mr. Chamberlain is a hard, cold man, in whose scheme of things there is little room for consideration of the feelings of others; one who regards his subordinates as the machinery by which he works out his ends, and who studies the idiosyncrasies of men merely for the purpose of acquiring an influence over them, which may be used for party purposes when the right time comes.

It is not improbable that the peculiar quality of his voice has had much to do with producing this impression. Its coldness and clearness, his incisive style of speaking, his constant use of sarcasm, his pitiless denunciation and exposure of trick, fraud, or inaccuracy of statement, the impassiveness of his face as he creates a phrase which shall stamp out an opponent or damn for ever a measure or a party, have combined to convince the public that Mr. Chamberlain is all head and no heart. How far this is from the truth only those intimately connected with him really know.

So far as the public sees he lives two lives—the one official, about which they think they know everything, the other, private, about which they know nothing. These are

so far dissociated that the public almost forgets there is a private life, and imagine that the Chamberlain of debate—cool, wary, relentless, absolute master of himself and of his facts, unmoved either by applause or dissent—is Chamberlain, the man, in his relations with his family, his friends, and mankind generally.

It is a great mistake. Certainly he could never wield the power he does, did he leave out of sight the better feelings, the softer emotions, the ennobling motives which play their part in life. But while recognising the strength of all of these, he is not deterred by their existence from fighting his political battles to the end. If the issues of the fight demand it, he will give no quarter to his opponent, and he has himself taken harder knocks than any other statesman. Perhaps the impression that there is but one Mr. Chamberlain, cold, hard, calculating, alike in public and private, is not so surprising when we reflect how little is known of his private life. What has the interviewer (even the ubiquitous American interviewer) ever been able to tell us of his real life? Beyond the fact that he has a passion for orchids, that he married a charming American wife, that his eldest son is in Parliament, that he wears an eyeglass, an orchid, and hates exercise, the public knows nothing of Mr. Chamberlain as a man. His private life, the life of his family is sacred. Mrs. Chamberlain does not speak in public, does not accord interviews, or give portraits for publication; his daughters' movements are not chronicled in the Press, and there are people who are not aware that he has a second son. His reluctance to extend the franchise to women is based (apart from political reasons) on his dislike to seeing them mixed up in the rough-and-tumble of public life.

His many acts of private charity are so privately performed

As a Benefactor. that they are not even suspected.  
 "More than once," said one who knew him intimately, "he has taken endless pains to set up a ne'er-do-well on his feet again; often perhaps the effort has been

wasted, but sometimes it was rewarded and that was enough for Mr. Chamberlain. He will not allow anything to come between him and his friends, and would do his utmost to smooth away any misunderstanding; he was the life and soul of the circle he moved in, before all the cares of office sat so heavily upon him; the truest and most loyal fellow it is possible to find."

To his servants he is a kind and considerate master: the gardener who first served him died in his service, and his town and country coachmen have both been with him for many years. He takes a kindly interest in those who serve him, and perhaps it may be allowable to mention that he steadily encourages his household in thrift and in making provision against old age, by adding each Christmas a *bonus* to the savings of both his indoor and outdoor servants. The privacy of Mr. Chamberlain's kindnesses, as well as of his benefactions, prevents any general knowledge of them, but one little incident may be related. A young citizen of Birmingham, after considerable hesitation, sent a request to the new M.P., Joseph Chamberlain, for some autographs of political men. A kindly reply was soon received saying that Mr. Chamberlain would try to secure some interesting examples for his correspondent, though he had seldom kept letters from distinguished men, unless for reference. The first letter was followed by a second, enclosing signatures of many well-known politicians including among others, Lord Kimberley, Lord Granville, Sir W. Harcourt, etc., etc.

Mr. Chamberlain has a particularly kindly way with young people, and enjoys chaffing them and drawing them out. "I can assure you," said a grave professor, "that Mr. Chamberlain has a light and airy side; when there is a dance or dinner at Highbury he exerts himself in the kindest and most genial way for the amusement of his guests, looks on at the dancing and is full of life and fun, and appears to enjoy himself as much as the youngest present. And there is some rare good conversation in the smoke-room after dinner."

Some people may find it difficult to realise that such a man as Mr. Chamberlain is truly fond of children ; **As a Father.** unlike many busy preoccupied men he likes to see them about and to spend what time he can spare playing with them, and his tiny guests are by no means neglected. In the days when his children were young he would not have them banished to the nursery, but kept them with him as much as possible, and was seldom too busy to play with them at their own games, or to devise treats for them. And in later years it has been said of him that his sons are his most intimate friends.

It may be that it is the combination of qualities in **Complexity of Character.** Mr. Chamberlain's character which has given rise to the false estimate of his personality. He is perhaps typical of the principle of combination, as he is certainly the most able living exponent of that principle whether in commercial, municipal, political, or Imperial life. There is scarcely a single quality which, with its opposite, has not found a place in his character, as it has been summed up, first by friend, then by foe. To him are attributed alike prudence and recklessness, undue reserve, unauthorised expansiveness, foresight, and a convenient blindness ; a total disregard for other men's opinions and a determination to persuade them to his way of thinking ; a cautiousness, which never fails to count the cost, and an indomitable obstinacy, which refuses to consider the means when the end is desirable ; the invaluable faculty which singles out the right man at the right moment, and a blind bigotry which refuses to see a single good quality in an opponent ; of a persuasiveness and graciousness unsurpassable when it pleases him, yet careless of inflicting wounds which fester but never heal ; possessed of a mighty patience which can bide its time to the uttermost limit, yet capable of deciding the problem of years and the fate of a nation without a moment's hesitation ; a man who can rouse to enthusiasm thousands of the hardest-headed of his fellows, and a man who is said to be incapable of intimate friendship. Such is

the contradictory estimate formed of the statesman and the man.

Yet this man, who is supposed to be without heart, generosity, or magnanimity, is nevertheless, he whose friends are those of his own household, who is most valued by those who best know him, and whose intimate circle remains the same, whether he be the unimportant Town Councillor, or the Colonial Secretary with the issues of peace and war in his hands.

His rule of life he has himself declared. "No work is worth doing badly; and he who puts his best into every task that comes to him will surely outstrip the man who waits for a great opportunity before he condescends to exert himself."



## APPENDIX

### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE—CHIEF EVENTS OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S CAREER

1836. July 8. Birth at Camberwell Grove, Camberwell, London.  
1845. Attends Miss Pace's School, Camberwell Grove.  
The Chamberlain family move to Highbury,  
London.  
Mr. Chamberlain attends Rev. Arthur Johnson's school, in Canonbury Square.
1850. Enters London University College School; remains two years.
1852. Enters his father's business, Milk Street, London.  
1854. Takes up his residence in Birmingham.  
Joins the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society—is President in 1868—and again in 1896.
1858. October. Hears John Bright's first speech in Birmingham.  
1861. Marriage with Miss Harriet Kenrick.
1863. Mrs. Chamberlain dies after the birth of her son Austen.
1865. Birmingham Liberal Association formed—Mr. Chamberlain joins it.
1866. August. Great Reform agitation—Brookfields demonstration.
1867. February. Birmingham Education Society founded.  
July. Murphy riots.
1868. June. Mr. Chamberlain makes his first long speech in support of George Dixon, M.P.—Three Liberal Candidates returned.
1869. June. Speech in Town Hall on Irish Disestablishment.  
Marriage with Miss Florence Kenrick.

1869. October. National Education League conference.  
November. Enters the Town Council unopposed for St. Paul's Ward.
1870. Member of the first School Board—"The Liberal Six."
1872. November. Electoral Reform Congress—Accused of Republicanism.
1873. Member of second School Board—Elected Chairman—"The Liberal Eight."
- November. Elected Mayor of Birmingham.
1874. January. Contests Sheffield—is defeated.  
Retires from business.
- November. Re-elected Mayor of Birmingham.
1875. March. Death of Mrs. Chamberlain.
- November. Re-elected Mayor.
1876. June. Resigns his Mayoralty and Chairmanship of School Board.  
Elected M.P. unopposed.
- July. Enters the House.
- August 4th. First Speech on Lord Sandon's Education Bill—Tour in Sweden and Lapland.
1877. May 31. Mr. Gladstone visits Birmingham—Great Meeting Bingley Hall—Federation of Liberal Associations.
1880. April. Enters Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade.
1883. Bankruptcy Bill and Patents Bill passed.
1884. Merchant Shipping Bill introduced—Finally withdrawn.
1885. June. Lord Salisbury takes Office—Election campaign begins—The Unauthorised Programme.
1886. January. Mr. Gladstone takes office.  
February. President of the Local Government Board.  
March. Resigns.  
August. Defeat of Home Rule Bill and Dissolution.  
" Lord Salisbury takes Office—In alliance with the Conservative Government.
1888. Returns from successful mission to America—  
March. Presented with Freedom of Borough of Birmingham.

1888. November. Marriage with Miss Endicott.  
 December. Returns to Highbury.
1889. January. Welcome to Mrs. Chamberlain—Congratulations on his marriage.
1892. August. Lord Salisbury resigns.  
 Mr. Gladstone forms a Ministry — Unionists in Opposition—Mr. Austen Chamberlain enters Parliament.
1893. February. Mr. Gladstone introduces second Home Rule Bill.  
 September. It is thrown out by the Lords.
1894. March. Mr. Gladstone resigns—Rosebery Administration.
1895. June. Defeat of the Government.  
 June 25. Lord Salisbury takes Office.  
 Mr. Chamberlain becomes Colonial Secretary, and his son Civil Lord of the Admiralty.
1896. January. Jameson Raid—Mr. Chamberlain telegraphs to stop Jameson.  
 July. Trial of Raiders—Commission of Inquiry demanded by Mr. Chamberlain.
1897. March. Sir A. Milner appointed High Commissioner in South Africa.  
 July. Report of Inquiry on Raid—Colonial Office Debate.  
 November. Visit to Glasgow—Lord Rector of Glasgow University.  
 „ Address on “Patriotism.”
1898. Work in connection with Workmen’s Compensation Bill.
1899. March. Petition of Outlanders presented to Queen—Acute stage of Transvaal dispute begins.  
 May. Bloemfontein Conference—It fails.  
 „ 4. Sir A. Milner’s Despatch.  
 July 28. Transvaal debate in the House—“Still hopeful.”  
 August 26. Highbury speech—Warning to Kruger.  
 Sept. 22. Last Despatch sent from this Country to South African Republic.  
 October 19. Boer Ultimatum — War proclaimed between Great Britain and the Transvaal — Boers invade Natal.

1899. October. Autumn Session begins—Attack on Mr. Chamberlain and the Government.
- November. Leicester Speech excites Adverse Comments.
- December. Visit to Dublin to receive Honorary Degree from the University.
1900. February. Session begins with an Attack on Government followed by motion to re-open Raid Inquiry—Attack on Mr. Chamberlain.
- „ Relief of Kimberley.
- „ 27. Majuba Day—Surrender of Cronje and 4,000 men.
- „ 29. Ladysmith Day—Relief of Ladysmith by General Buller.
- April Orange Free State annexed — Proclaimed a British Colony.
- May. 18. Mafeking Day—Relief of Mafeking.
- „ The Chancellor Birmingham University.
- June. Pretoria taken.
- „ Australian Commonwealth Bill introduced.
- July. Passed.
- August. Discovery of Pretoria Correspondence.
- September. Transvaal proclaimed a British Colony.
- „ Flight of ex-President Kruger to Lorenzo Marquez.
- „ 18. Royal Proclamation declares the Federated Colonies of Australia will become the Australian Commonwealth from January 1st, 1901.
- „ 25. Dissolution of Parliament.

# ENGLAND AND THE TRANSVAAL

*Table of Dates, 1881—1900*

ENGLAND.	TRANSVAAL.
<b>1877.</b>	Request for annexation.
Ap. 12. Transvaal annexed.	
<b>1880.</b>	
Dec. Revolt of Boers (1st Boer War).	
<b>1881.</b>	
Feb. Majuba Hill.	
Aug. Convention of Pretoria.	Aug. Convention of Pretoria signed.
<b>1884.</b>	<b>1884.</b>
Feb. Convention of London.	Feb. Kruger signs Convention of London.
<b>1885.</b>	<b>1885.</b>
Sir C. Warren's Bechuanaland Expedition.	Raid into Bechuanaland (Englishmen killed), and invasion of Zululand and Swaziland.
	Discovery of Gold mines. Influx of Outlanders.
<b>1894.</b>	<b>1894.</b>
Lord Ripon's despatch demanding Franchise for Outlanders.	Commandeering British subjects to fight Natives.
<b>1895.</b>	<b>1895.</b>
Mr. Schreiner and Cape Colony urge Government to send an ultimatum to Transvaal Republic.	Closing drifts against Cape Merchandise.

## ENGLAND.

## 1896.

- Jan. Jameson Raid.
- Feb. Despatch asking redress for Outlanders' grievances.
- Feb. Meeting of Parliament—Mr. Chamberlain demands inquiry into Raid.
- July. Trial of Raiders. Commission of inquiry into the Raid appointed.
- Oct. Colonial Office protest against Alien Immigration Act.

## 1897.

- Jan. Further remonstrances.
- Mar. Mr. Chamberlain again protests, pointing out other infringements of Convention.
- „ Appointment of Sir A. Milner.
- July. Commission of Inquiry present their Report on Raid.
- „ Debate in House on Report—Speech by Mr. Chamberlain.

## TRANSVAAL.

## 1896.

- Jan. Arrest of Reform Committee and Fines—£190,000.
- Feb. Outlanders' Grievances denied by Kruger. Remonstrance against interference in internal affairs of the Republic.
- July. Alien Immigration Act proposed in Raad.
- Oct. Alien Immigration Act becomes law.

## 1897.

- Jan. Alien Immigration Act comes into operation.
- Jan. 8. Despatch from Dr. Leyds justifies it.
- Jan. 17. Kruger replies that he intends to enforce it.
- May. Important despatch demanding Arbitration and quoting "International Law as applied to Treaties between Independent Powers."

## 1898.

- April. Dr. Leyds' Despatch. Repudiates Suzerainty and asserts right of Republic to Arbitration on all points at issue.
- Dec. Murder of Thomas Edgar.

## 1899.

- Jan. Indignation meeting broken up by Boers.

ENGLAND.

1899.

- May 4. Sir A. Milner's famous despatch on Outlanders' grievances.
- May. Outlanders' petition accepted. Mr. Chamberlain invites President Kruger to discuss points of dispute at Conference.
- Sir A. Milner refuses to "buy the Franchise" by concessions, and closes the Conference.
- July. Despatch in which the Government refuse absolutely to discuss question of Suzerainty any longer with Republic.
- July 28. Debate in House—Mr. Chamberlain still hopeful.
- Aug. 26. Highbury Speech. Warning to Kruger.
- Aug. 28. Despatch A. Can accept 5 years' Franchise, and agree to conditions 2, 3, but refuse 1 absolutely.

TRANSVAAL.

1899.

- Jan. Mr. Reitz' despatch asserting inherent rights of Republic as "Sovereign International State."
- Mar. Outlanders' Petition to Queen.
- June. Bloemfontein Conference. President Kruger does not discuss Suzerainty—but wishes to "sell" the Franchise for Outlanders in return for Arbitration and other concessions.
- Aug. 22. Despatch, offering 5 years' Franchise on condition—
1. Of no future interference by England in internal affairs of Transvaal.
  2. Suzerainty question being allowed to drop.
  3. Arbitration conceded.
- Sept. 2. Reply to A. Five years' Franchise withdrawn unless all conditions conceded—7 years' substituted.

## ENGLAND.

1899.

- Sept. 8. Despatch B. Seven years' Franchise refused absolutely. Still willing to accept five years' Franchise if condition (1) withdrawn and if on examination proposal gives "substantial immediate representation." English to be used in Raad. If refused will formulate own proposals.

- Sept. 22. Despatch C. Useless to prolong the negotiations. The Government are compelled to consider question afresh, and will communicate own proposals later.

## TRANSVAAL.

1899.

- Sept. 16. Reply to B.
1. Refuse to lay 5 years' proposal before Raad unless all conditions accepted.
  2. Again demand Arbitration.
  3. Protest against new conditions and proposals.
- Oct. 19. Reply to C. The Ultimatum.

## LIST OF AUTHORITIES CONSULTED

The chief Authorities consulted are :

- Joseph Chamberlain* ("Public Men of To-day"). S. H. Jeyes.  
*The Life of the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain*. B. C. Skottowe.  
*Life of R. W. Dale of Birmingham*. By his Son.  
*History of the Corporation of Birmingham*. J. Thackray Bunce.  
*Modern Birmingham, and a Century of Birmingham Life*. J. A. Langford, LL.D.  
*Old and New Birmingham*. R. K. Dent.  
*The Transvaal from Within*. J. P. Fitzpatrick.  
*Who is Responsible for the South African War?* Lewis Appleton, F.R.H.S.  
*The Transvaal Question*. Translated from the French of Edouard Naville.  
*The Birmingham Daily Post, Town Crier, Dart, Midland Counties Herald*, and many local pamphlets.



## LIST OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S ARTICLES

DATE.	MAGAZINE.	ARTICLE.
1873.—Sept.	<i>Fortnightly.</i>	"The Liberal Party and its Leaders."
1874.—Oct.	"	"The Next Page of the Liberal Programme."
1876.—May.	"	"The Right Method with the Publicans."
1876.—Dec.	"	"A Visit to Lapland, with Notes on Swedish Licensing."
1877.—Jan.	"	"The Schools."
1877.—Feb.	"	"Municipal Publichouses."
1877.—July.	"	"A New Political Organisation."
1878.—Nov.	"	"The Caucus."
1883.—Dec.	"	"Labourers' and Artisans' Dwellings."
1886.—Feb.	"	"A Radical View of the Irish Crisis."
1890.—Dec.	<i>Nineteenth Century.</i>	"Shall we Americanise our Municipal Institutions?"
1891.—May.	<i>North American Review.</i>	"Favourable Aspects of State Socialism."
1892.—Feb.	<i>National Review.</i>	"Old Age Pensions."
1892.—Nov.	<i>Forum.</i>	"Municipal Institutions in America and England."
1892.—Nov.	<i>Nineteenth Century.</i>	"The Labour Question."
1893.—April.	<i>Nineteenth Century.</i>	"A Bill for the Weakening of Great Britain."
1894.—June.	<i>New Review.</i>	"Municipal Government."
1898.—Dec.	<i>Scribner's Magazine.</i>	"The Policy of the United States."

## MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S ADDRESS

*September 21st, 1900*

TO THE ELECTORS OF THE WEST DIVISION OF THE  
CITY OF BIRMINGHAM

GENTLEMEN,—On the invitation of the Unionist Committee of the Division, I once more ask you for the renewal of the confidence and support which on five previous occasions have returned me as your representative in the House of Commons.

The issue, which, in common with the rest of the electors of the United Kingdom, you will be called upon to decide, is the most important presented to the people of this country during the present generation.

We have reached the final stage in a great war, which has involved a heavy sacrifice of life and treasure, but has been made illustrious by the heroism of the Imperial forces and the patriotism of all classes of the people of the United Kingdom, and has also enlisted for the first time in the history of the Empire the enthusiastic support of our kinsmen in all the self-governing colonies.

You are now asked to say whether this war was just and inevitable, or whether it was only another instance of the policy of greed and oppression of which our enemies accuse us. Above all you are asked to decide whether the glorious valour of our soldiers, the ungrudging support of our fellow-subjects in all parts of the world, and the sacrifices which we and they have sustained are now to be thrown away, or whether the objects with which the war was undertaken are to be fully secured.

The Government of this country derives its strength and influence from the people. Those who wish ill to Britain, whether in South Africa or nearer home, have been encouraged by the hope of a reaction in popular opinion which would weaken the hands of the

Executive, and snatch from us, even at the last moment, the fruits of victory.

I have confidence that my countrymen will disappoint these expectations, and with no uncertain voice will justify the efforts which we have made to maintain the supremacy of the Queen in South Africa, and to protect British subjects from intolerable insult and oppression.

Our opponents assert that we deliberately provoked a war for which we made no preparation.

The first statement is untrue, and the second is greatly exaggerated.

The war was forced upon us by the sudden invasion and occupation of her Majesty's territories by the armed forces of the Republics at a time when negotiations for a peaceful settlement were still proceeding.

These negotiations were conducted on our part, from first to last, in a spirit of the greatest moderation; and it is admitted, even by the best friends of the Boers, that a reasonable concession to our just demands would have been for the benefit of the South African Republic, and would have secured its independence and preserved peace. But President Kruger and the corrupt oligarchy which followed his lead were determined to concede nothing, but to maintain, at all hazards, the monopoly of power which they had abused, for their own advantage, and to the injury of the great majority of the population, who had been invited into the Transvaal on the faith of a solemn promise of equal rights and privileges.

The Orange Free State entered into the contest without even the pretence of a grievance of their own, and in spite of the declaration of President Steyn that they would in no case be the aggressor.

It is true, then, in a certain limited sense, that we were unprepared for an attack, for which there was no just or reasonable pretext.

It is also true that, foreseeing as we did the serious nature of such a contest, we desired to avoid it by all means short of a betrayal of our fellow-subjects and a surrender of the rights of the Queen; and that, accordingly, we refrained as long as possible from a demonstration of military force which would have certainly precipitated the conflict. But we did, nevertheless, raise the garrison in South Africa from three thousand, at which it was left by our predecessors, to twenty-two thousand, at which it stood in the first week

of the war—a force which we were advised by the highest authorities in this country and in South Africa would be sufficient to maintain the strategic points until an army equal to offensive operations could arrive in South Africa. This advice was justified in the result, and the successful defence of Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking has confirmed the confidence which was placed in the courage and resource of the troops who thus withstood the brunt of the enemy's attack.

The subsequent operations of the war have involved the despatch of more than two hundred thousand men with their artillery and supplies, and this great force, many times larger than has ever left these shores before, or has ever been sent abroad by any other country with a similar object, has been transported without the loss of a single life over six thousand miles of sea.

It has been required not only to beat the enemy in the field, but also to maintain the communications of the army over more than fifteen hundred miles in a country peculiarly adapted to surprises, every inch of which is known to the brave and active men who have resisted our advance.

Under the skilful leadership of Lord Roberts all difficulties have been overcome, and the Governments of the two Republics have now paid the penalty of their insolent aggression, and have ceased to exist.

It is the policy of the present Government, which you are asked to approve, that these separate and independent Governments, which have been a constant menace to her Majesty's supremacy in South Africa, shall never again be restored; but that after a period of administration backed by military force, the length of which will depend on the readiness with which the Boer population accept the British flag, the people of the two States shall be received into the Empire on the footing of self-governing colonies, in which position they will enjoy more liberty than they ever did before, and an equality of rights and privilege which they have persistently denied to the British in their midst.

The success of this policy, which has been approved by all the self-governing colonies that have taken part in the war, depends upon its continuity. Any weakening of the Government—any sign of change in the resolution of the people—will be the signal for intrigues which must delay and which may defeat it.

It is on these grounds, and in what I believe to be the vital

interests of this country and of the whole British Empire, that I ask you now to approve the policy that the Government has pursued, and to strengthen our hands in the effort to secure a final and satisfactory settlement.

In this work we have had neither sympathy nor support from the great majority of the Parliamentary Opposition, which now claims to represent the Liberal party, and it is clear from the speeches and votes of many of those who are influential among them that they would, if they had the opportunity, reverse or at least alter the policy which has secured the enthusiastic approval of our kinsmen in all parts of the world. The latest information shows that it is on the expectation of such a change that Mr. Kruger and his supporters have relied. It is for you to show that they have been misled and mistaken.

Another question requires immediate consideration as a result of the war, which, while it has shown the enormous resources of the country, has, nevertheless, disclosed faults in our military system which urgently call for review and reform. Such a reorganisation as modern conditions appear to have rendered necessary can only be successfully undertaken by a Government strongly supported by public opinion and by a Parliament with a clear mandate from the constituencies.

These are the great issues of the present election which overshadow all others. But I am confident that you will remember in connection with them the general character of the foreign and colonial policy of the Unionist Government.

As Unionists we have defeated the policy of disintegration, which would have weakened the citadel of the Empire, and made us the laughing-stock of the civilised world; and we have realised, as never before, the unity of the British race, and have restored the pride and confidence of our colonies in the leadership of the Motherland.

If we had nothing else to appeal to than the higher sense, which we have helped to create, of the mutual obligation of the different parts of her Majesty's dominions to one another, I should on these grounds alone ask hopefully for the support of all who care for the present greatness of their country, and who look forward with confident anticipation to the future development of the Empire.

But in thus dealing with great questions of external policy, we have not neglected the claims of domestic legislation, and the great

work of social reform which it has been a special object of the Unionist party to promote. We have placed upon the Statute Book during the last five years a number of Acts dealing with education, local government, artisans' dwellings, compensation for accidents, the protection of workmen in mines and factories, the safety of railway servants, and many others, which contrast favourably with the absolutely barren efforts of our predecessors, and which have contributed to the happiness and well-being of the masses of the population, while they have been accompanied by an exceptional development of trade, and an unparalleled general prosperity.

Gentlemen, the record of the Government is before you. I submit it with confidence to your judgment, and I hope that you may be induced once more to send me to Parliament as a representative of the city whose welfare has been one of the greatest objects of my life.

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant.

# INDEX

- ACQUISITION of Small Houses Bill, 1899; Introduced by Mr. Chamberlain, 309; Principles of, 313
- Adderley, Mr., Edgbaston Debating Society, mention in Parliament, 48
- Afghan War, Mr. Chamberlain's views on, 170
- Africa:—  
     Egyptian Question (*see* that title)  
     Railway extensions since Mr. Chamberlain took office, 381, 382  
     Transvaal (*see* that title; also South African War)  
     West African Colonies:—  
         Backward state of; improvements, 380, 382; Malaria investigations, 383
- Agricultural Labourers:—  
     Mr. Chamberlain's "Unauthorised Programme," 1885, popularity among, 221; Franchise extension movement, 194, 195; Effect of Allotments Act, 290
- Agriculture, department for Ireland Bill, 1899, 316
- Alexandria, Bombardment of, 210
- Allotments Act, 1887, 290
- Allotments and distress; movement after dock strike, 1889, 288
- Amateur theatricals, Mr. Chamberlain's taste for, 21, 53
- America, Mr. Chamberlain's visit to (*see* United States)
- American municipal and political methods: Mr. Chamberlain's articles in *Nineteenth Century*, 1890-92, 305.
- Ancestry and Birth (*see* Birth and Ancestry)
- Anderton, Mr. T., speech by Mr. Chamberlain, Edgbaston Debating Society, 49
- Annexation: Countries annexed by Britain previous to Victorian Era, 16
- Aris Gazette*, Mr. Chamberlain's Debating Society speeches, 49
- Army, flogging in; Lord Hartington's Bill; attack by Mr. Chamberlain, 168; military system, deficiencies in system of defence, etc. (*see* South African War)
- Articles by Mr. Chamberlain, list of, 439
- Asia Minor, Bulgarian atrocities, etc. (*see* Eastern Question)
- Asquith, Mr., Australian Commonwealth Bill, 390
- Atwood, Mr., Birmingham Political Union addresses, etc., 28, 36, 62; Parliamentary candidate for Birmingham, 31
- Audacity a characteristic in Mr. Chamberlain's speeches, opinion on, 53
- Australian Commonwealth, first Federal Parliament; opening by Duke of York arrangements, 392; Earl of Hopetoun as first Governor-General, 392
- Australian Commonwealth Bill:—  
     Clause 74, restriction of right of appeal to Privy Council; Mr. Chamberlain's speech and subsequent negotiations with delegates, 387-91

**Australian Commonwealth Bill**  
(*cont.*):—

Introduced into Imperial Parliament; Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 387

Origin of Federation movement; credit due to Earl Grey and Sir. H. Parkes, 386

Press comments, 391

Second reading; Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 388-90

Third reading and passing as law; members of the House of Commons summoned to hear royal assent accorded, 391-92

Ayr, Mr. Chamberlain's speech; defence of the Crimes Act, 1887, 274

**BALFOUR, MR. A.:**—

Administration in Ireland as Chief Secretary, 273; tour in Ireland, 1890; establishment of Congested Districts' Board, 294-5

Irish Local Government Bill, 1892, 295

Jameson Raid inquiry—accusations against Mr. Chamberlain; defence, 335

Land (Ireland) Act, 1891; working of, 294

Relations between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour, 407, 408

South African War debates, 360, 364, 371

**Bankruptcy Bills:**—

Bill, 1883: merits of, observations by Mr. Chamberlain, 187, 188

Introduction of Bill, 1880, failure of, 187

*Baptist*, Mr. Chamberlain's letter on the Round Table Conference, 272

Barttelot, Sir W., impression of Mr. Chamberlain on first appearance, House of Commons, 145

Beach, Sir M. Hicks-, Budget proposals, 1885; resolution, defeat of the Government, 213

**Beaconsfield, Lord:**—

Eastern Question policy, 168 ;

**Beaconsfield, Lord (*cont.*):**—

"Peace with Honour"; Treaty of Berlin, 170

Foreign policy; liberal opinion and continuance of policy, 1880-85, 208

General Election 1880, returns resignation after publication of, 173-4

Term of office, etc.; dissolution of Parliament, 1880, 171

Berlin, Treaty of, 170

Berrow Court, Mr. Chamberlain's residence at, 54

**Birmingham:**—

Art gallery, erection of; subscriptions, etc., 108, 109, 179

Chamberlain Memorial, 1880, erection of, 178

Chamberlain's, Mr., connection with: Arrival in Birmingham, 1854, 21, 25, 33, 35, 44; Citizen of Birmingham; adoption of the town, 4, 10, 132, 133; Commercial life (*see* business career); Freedom of the city bestowed on Mr. Chamberlain, 279; Gifts to the town, 108, 109, 123; Liberal friends' meeting after Home Rule division, Mr. Chamberlain's Appeal, 402; Municipal work (*see* that title); Private life in Birmingham, 46, 47, 54, 62; School Board (*see* that sub-heading)

Council House foundation stone laid, 1874; Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 103-5

Dissenters' settlement in, effect of Five-Mile Act, 25

Education Conference, 1869, 75, 77

Educational facilities (*see* Education)

Factories and workshops, children's hours of labour in 1833, 35

Fairs, abolition of, 125

Free libraries: Development of; letters and subscriptions from Mr. Chamberlain, 108, 109 ;



**Birmingham (cont.) :—**

- Fire in 1879, 176; Subscriptions for erection of new buildings, 177, 178
- Gaol Scandals, 1853, 34
- Gas, Water, and Improvement Schemes (*see* that title)
- Gladstone's, Mr., visit, 1877, 156-60
- Highgate Park Opening Ceremony, Speech by Mr. Chamberlain, 108
- History of the town, political and social influences, 25, 26, 27
- Improvement Schemes: Backwardness of the Town Council, change of policy under Mr. Chamberlain and others, 34; Chamberlain's proposals, town improvement, 110; Contributions given by Kenrick Family, 54; Sanitary Congress, 109
- Industrial Exhibition, 1849: Prince Consort's visit, 33
- Irish Church Bill Agitation, meetings, 68-73
- Loyalty of the town: Volunteer movement support, etc., 35, 36
- Mayoralty: Acquisition of Mayor and Corporation in 1837, 31, 32; Mr. Chamberlain in office (*see* Municipal Work); Mr. J. Collings as Mayor, 176; Difficulties of Office, Mr. Bunce on, 103; Mr. Dixon as Mayor, unpopularity of, 64, 65
- Municipal elections, effect of division in Liberal Party on Home Rule, 267, 268
- Murphy riots, 1867, 64, 65
- Musical festivals, 34
- Parliamentary representation (*see* Birmingham constituencies)
- Political status of the town: Influence of Mr. Chamberlain, 1; Poem by Freeth, 27
- Queen's visit in 1858, opening of Aston Park, 36

**Birmingham (cont.) :—**

- Reform agitation, 28, 31, 32; Brookfield's demonstration, 1866, 61, 62; Scots Greys stationed in Birmingham, 1832, 29, 30, 31
- School Board: Mr. Chamberlain's reference to Debate on Lord Sandon's Education Bill, 143, 144; Establishment of 1st and 2nd Boards, Mr. Chamberlain's work in connection with, 82-4; Retirement of Mr. Chamberlain from the Board, 109
- School of Art prize distribution, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 1899, 368, 369
- Social life, change wrought in political clubs, etc., by Home Rule Question, Dr. Dale on, 300
- Social and industrial advancement, 33
- Town Council: Mr. Chamberlain as Councillor and Mayor (*see* Municipal Work).
- Dispute with 1st School Board, 23, 84 (*See also* sub-heading Improvement Schemes)
- Trades Council, conference at Highbury, 310
- Unitarian community, influence of, 47
- University (*see* Birmingham University)
- Wales's, Prince and Princess visit, reception and speech by Mr. Chamberlain, 105-7
- Working men's testimonial to Charles Dickens, 33
- Workpeople, Mr. Chamberlain's intercourse with, 44, 45
- Birmingham artisans' dwellings and Improvement Act, 1875, 115; Criticism on, Mr. Chamberlain's reply, 122, 123
- Birmingham Arts Club, foundation and history of, 182-5
- Birmingham constituencies—representation in Parliament, etc.:—
  - Bright returned, 1857, 33; first speech by Bright 56-9

Birmingham constituencies—representation in Parliament, etc. (*cont.*):—

Chamberlain's, Mr., constituency, speeches, etc.; Addresses presented to Mr. Chamberlain on marriage with Miss Endicott, 1888, reply, etc., 284-5; Democratic constituency—Chamberlain on his experiences as Parliamentary candidate for, 401; First speech to constituents, election as Member for Birmingham, 1876, 138; Home Rule—explanation of Secession from Government, 252-6; Jameson Raid, address after, 407-8; Length of service, 404; Relations between Mr. Chamberlain and his constituents, description of scene during delivery of speeches, etc., 226, 398, 400; Reception in 1900; Approval of South African policy, 403; Review of position of political parties, 1888, 280 (*see also* sub-headings General Elections)

Conservative member, Mr. Spooner, return of, 32, 33, 62

First members, 31

General Election, 1868: Candidates, 68; Conservative memorial cards, 72; Mr. Dixon's candidature, 64; resignation, 1876, 137

General Election, 1880: Candidates, 171; Cartoon "Parliamentary Train," 172

General Election, 1885: Return of the seven members, 226, 227; Banquet in celebration of Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 229; Election addresses by Mr. Chamberlain, 225

General Election, 1886: Bordesley division meeting, speech by Mr. Chamberlain, 262; Chamberlain's address, reasons for accepting cabinet office, 238, 239; Returns seven Unionist members, 262

Birmingham constituencies—representation in Parliament, etc. (*cont.*):—

General Election, 1895: Returns Mr. Chamberlain's opponent, 308

General Election, 1900: Mr. Chamberlain's candidature, 404; Address to electors, 404, 440-44

*Birmingham Daily Post*:—

Chamberlain, Mr., a "Parliamentary Aunt Sally": South African War debate, 361

"Unionist policy for Ireland" articles, 282

Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society (*see* Edgbaston Debating Society)

Birmingham Education Society: Foundation of in 1867, 74, 75; Lord Robert Montagu's attack on, Mr. Collings' reply, 76, 77; Presidency of George Dixon, Esq., 64; *Punch* verses on, 79

Birmingham Gas Bill, 1875, 115

Birmingham Liberal Association: Annual meeting; Mr. Chamberlain's speech on Home Rule, 251-56; Resolutions, votes of confidence in Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain, 255; Formation of, reorganisation of "The Caucus," 62, 65, 66, 67; Irish Church Bill agitation meetings, 68-73

Birmingham Liberal Club:—

Foundation and closure of the Club, 184, 185, 300

General Election, 1885; excitement at the Club, 227

Birmingham Liberalism, Mr. Chamberlain on, 138

Birmingham Liberals: Meeting with Mr. Chamberlain after division in the party, discussion on Home Rule, 402

Birmingham Liberal-Unionist Association: Mr. Chamberlain elected President, 1888; Speech on the Irish Question, 282; Work as President, 401

Birmingham and Midland Institute, foundation in 1853, 33

- Birmingham political associations and societies, formation of, 32
- Birmingham political union :—  
 Atwood's, Mr., address, loyalty of the town, 36  
 Formation and objects of the Union 28, 29  
 Reform agitation meetings, 29-32
- Birmingham religious education society, formation of, 84
- Birmingham Town Crier* :—  
 Entry of Mr. Chamberlain into Parliament, comments, 141, 142  
 Council House, curator's letter on Highbury House, 181  
 "Judicious Joseph" : Visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Birmingham, 107  
 Sheffield election, defeat of Mr. Chamberlain, 96
- Birmingham University, foundation of : Mr. Chamberlain's work in connection with, subscriptions raised, etc., 393, 395, 396 ; Mason Science College Connection, 393, 394 ; Royal Charter, reception of, 396 ; Mr. Chamberlain's speech as Chancellor and address to students, 397-8 ; Scheme for, speeches in, 1898, 1900, 394-5
- Birmingham Water Works Bill, 1875, Royal assent, 115, 117
- Birmingham Workmen's Debating Club, formation of, 45-6
- Birth and ancestry, 4, 5, 9 ; Birmingham connections, 10 ; Birthplace and date of birth, 10 ; R. Serjeant's connections : descendants' memorial tablet, 9
- Bloemfontein Conference (*see* Transvaal Crisis)
- Board Schools, grant in aid, 1896 ; Mr. Chamberlain's support, 289
- Board of Trade Presidency : Appointment and term of office, 137, 175 ; Bills, etc., introduced during period of office, 187-91 ; Resignation proposal after defeat of Merchant Shipping Bill, 191
- Bradford Speeches :—  
 Division in the Liberal Party ; speech, 1888, 281  
 Electioneering campaign, 1885, 224
- Bradlaugh, Mr., and his right to affirm, reference to, 186
- Bright, Mr. :—  
 Birmingham Liberal Club opening ceremony, 1879, 185  
 Board of Trade appointment, 175  
 Chamberlain and Bright, relations between : Bright's references to Chamberlain's career, 81, 82, 165 ; Chamberlain's reference in speech 1877, 160 ; Influence of Bright's politics, 56, 52, 60, 61, 62 ; Liberal federation, co-operation and agreement, 164-5  
 Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster appointment, 175  
 Colonial Policy : Expansion of empire, non-approval, 57, 380 ; Zulu War, influence of views on Mr. Chamberlain, 170  
 Corn Laws Repeal Agitation, 16, 34 ; alleged commercial advantage to Bright, 40  
 Example and advice to Liberal Party, Mr. Chamberlain on, 163  
 First speech to Birmingham Constituency, 56-59 ; Edgbaston, Debating Society criticism, 47, 48, 58  
 Home Rule policy : Attitude on defeat of Government 1886, 230 ; Comments by Mr. Chamberlain, etc., 259, 260  
 Interest in politics, origin of, 19  
 Irish Church Bill Agitation, Birmingham meeting, 1869, letter, 69  
 Parliamentary candidate for Birmingham, 33, 172, 227  
 Reform agitation : Bright's policy, 57, 59, 60 ; Brookfields demonstration appeal, 61, 62 ; Second Reform Bill, 1866, letter to Birmingham, 60

Bright, Mr. (*cont.*):—

Resignation of Seal of Office,  
1882, 210

Broadhurst, Mr., Birmingham Par-  
liamentary candidate, 227, 262

Brookfields Reform demonstration,  
1866, 47, 61, 62

"Brummagem," *Punch* verses, etc.,  
on, 26, 79

Buluwayo railway, opening of: Mr.  
Chamberlain's message, 381

Bunce, Mr., Birmingham Town  
Council History, etc., 99, 103

Burke, Mr., murder of, effect on the  
Irish Question, 203-5

Burnaby, Captain, Birmingham Par-  
liamentary candidate, 1880, 171, 172

Business Career:—

Commercial policy: Press attack  
on, 41, 44; Success of, 55

Entry into father's house of busi-  
ness, 19

Intercourse with working men  
in Birmingham, establishment

of clubs, etc., 44-45

Nettlefold and Chamberlain,  
entry of Mr. J. Chamberlain,  
junior, into Firm, 37, 44

Retirement, financial position,  
etc., 37, 55, 124

Screw trade difficulties in 1854:  
Information obtained from  
France, etc., 38-40

Byars, Farmer, murdered in Ireland,  
275

Byrne, F.: American Irish "Physical  
Force Party," 274

Byrne, Mrs.: Connection with  
Phoenix Park murders, 274

CABINET and Government Appoint-  
ments:—

Colonial Secretaryship (*see* that  
title)

Gladstone's Government, Cham-  
berlain's secession from (*see*  
Gladstone Administration)

Resignation proposals, 191, 224

Salisbury administration (*see*  
that title)

Term of office as Cabinet  
Minister, 137; views expressed  
by working men, 181

Calthorpe, Hon. A. G., Birmingham  
candidate, General Election, 1880,  
171, 172

Camberwell, Mr. Chamberlain's  
early childhood in, 10-14

Came, John, Memorial Window,  
Cordwainers' Hall, unveiling cere-  
mony, 6, 7

Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Henry:  
Home Rule, Mr. Redmond's atti-  
tude in 1899, 317

Canadian settler, Union Jack sent  
to, from Colonial Office, 413

Canonbury School, Chamberlain's  
education at, 16

Cape Colony:—

Dutch in: Disloyal propaganda

—Sir A. Milner's Despatch,  
Transvaal crisis, 343; Posi-  
tion of Dutchmen in the Cape  
in comparison with English-  
men in the Transvaal, 340

Milner, Sir A., as High Com-  
missioner (*see* Milner)

Capel, Mr., educational facilities in  
Birmingham, 74

Carnarvon, Lord, resignation as  
Colonial Secretary, 169

Carter Lane Chapel: Memorial  
Tablet to J. Chamberlain, senior,  
9

Cartoons:—

Birmingham collection—  
General Election, 1880, etc.,  
172

Chamberlain's, Mr., collection  
at Highbury, 420

Gothenburg Licensing System  
—Mr. Chamberlain as a pub-  
lican, 172

*Punch* cartoons (*see* that title)

Cavagnari, Sir L., murdered at  
Cabul, 170

Cavendish, Lord Frederick, murder  
of: Effect on Irish Question, 203,  
204, 205

Chamberlain, Daniel, malster, 5

Chamberlain, Mr. Austen: Civil  
Lord of the Admiralty appoint-  
ment, 309; Education and career,  
298; Highbury Dairy Farm man-  
agement, 421; Maiden speech,  
House of Commons, Mr. Glad-

- stone's criticism, 299, 300; Parliamentary election, 1892, returned for East Worcestershire, 298
- Chamberlain, Mr. J., senior: Business career, 124; Death of, 124; Description by nephew, 20; Marriage and family, 9; Memorial tablet, Carter Lane Chapel, 9; Political views, 15; Settlement in Birmingham, 124
- Chamberlain, Mr. Richard:—  
 Career of: Business career, 124; Mayoralty of Birmingham, 178-80; Member of Parliament for Islington, 180  
 Death of: Reference in Sir E. Russell's "Reminiscences," etc., 180, 423
- Chamberlain, Mrs. J., senior, death of, 124
- Chamberlain, Mrs. J., junior, death of, 54
- Chamberlain, Mrs. J., junior, death of: Birmingham Town Council resolution of condolence, 128, 129
- Chamberlain, Mrs. J., junior:—  
 Death of her father, Mr. Endicott: Birmingham resolutions of, sympathy, 403  
 Endicott family history, 283-5  
 Entertainments in honour of marriage, 283-5  
 Public work, Colonial Nursing Association Committee, etc., 417
- Chamberlain Family: Ancestry, commercial connection, etc., 5-10; Connections by marriage with Unitarian families, 9; Cordwainers' Company connection, 7; Religious views, 9
- Chamberlain memorial, Birmingham, 178
- Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, Congress 1896, 384
- Character and personality of Mr. Chamberlain: Character in childhood, description by Miss Pace, 11-14; Reasons for misapprehension of, complexity of character, etc., 425-30
- Chartist movement and riots, 32
- Childhood at Camberwell, 11-14
- Children's labour in factories, regulation, 15, 25
- Chronological table of events 1889-1900, 433, 434
- Churchill, Lord R.:—  
 Cabinet appointment 1885, 216  
 Defeat of Liberal Government 1885; scene in the House, 213  
 Franchise Bill Debate 1884, 194  
 Leadership of the House of Commons 1886, 271  
 Salisbury Ministry, Lord R. Churchill's conduct and policy, Mr. Chamberlain on, 220
- Citizenship of Birmingham (*see* Birmingham)
- Clark, Dr., South African War, Pretoria correspondence, 355
- Clark, Sir E.: Mr. Chamberlain's colonial policy, criticism, 363; Severance from party, protest against Unionist policy, South African War, 364
- Cobden, Corn Laws repeal agitation, 16
- Coercion (Ireland) Act, comparison with Crimes Act 1887, 273
- Colley, Sir G., Boer War, defeat 1880, 209
- Collings, Mr. J.:—  
 Birmingham connections: Education society, 74, 76, 77; Free Libraries and Art Gallery—Chamberlain's letter and subscription, 108, 109; General Election, 1886—returned for Birmingham, 262; Mayoralty of Birmingham at period of the Free Libraries Fire, 1879, 176-78; School Board membership, 84  
 Forster's Education Bill, 83  
 Gladstone's, Mr., criticism of, 262  
 Parliamentary Secretary to Home Office appointment, 309
- Colonial and Foreign policy:—  
 Afghan War: Criticism by Mr. Chamberlain, 170

- Colonial and Foreign policy (*cont.*):—  
 Beaconsfield's, Lord, policy :  
   Position of Great Britain on  
   access of Liberal Government  
   to power, 208  
 Bright's views, 47, 48, 57, 58,  
 380; influence with Mr.  
 Chamberlain, 170  
 Chamberlain's, Mr., Colonial  
 views : Features of Colonial  
 policy, 379; Glasgow Univer-  
 sity rectorial address, 1897,  
 319, 320; Sympathy instead  
 of apathy in Colonial affairs,  
 378, 379  
 Eastern question : Division of  
 opinion among parties, 168  
 Gladstone's policy, 380  
 Imperial Federation (*see* that  
 title)  
 South African War (*see* that  
 title)  
 Transvaal Crisis (*see* that title)  
 Zulu War : Mr. Chamberlain's  
 disapproval, 170  
 Colonial Nursing Association, 382  
 Colonial Railway Extension, ad-  
 vance since Mr. Chamberlain took  
 office, 381  
 Colonial Secretaryship :—  
   Appointment, 309; reasons for  
   acceptance of office, 378,  
   379  
   Domestic legislation, attention  
   to, 309, 311  
   Period of office, 137  
   Review of work at Colonial  
   Office, 409-14  
 Colonisation and annexation move-  
 ments previous to Victorian Era,  
 16  
 Commercial career (*see* Business  
 Career)  
 Commercial connections of the  
 Chamberlain family, 5-10  
 Commercial and Municipal life in  
 Birmingham, 1854-76, Book II., 23  
 Compensation for Disturbances Bill,  
 1880, Chamberlain on the rejec-  
 tion of, 200  
 Conservative Government (*see* Salis-  
 bury administration)  
 Conservative and Liberal-Unionist  
 coalition (*see* Liberal Party—  
 Division)  
 Conservative Memorial Card, elec-  
 tions, 1868, 72  
 Constructive legislation—Mr. Cham-  
 berlain's power of debate, 186  
 Cook, Alderman—Birmingham can-  
 didate, election, 1886, 262  
 Cook, Professor—Recollections by  
 Mr. Chamberlain, 18  
 Cordwainers' Company : Chamber-  
 lain family connections, 5, 7, 8  
 Cordwainers' Hall : John Came,  
 memorial window, unveiling cere-  
 mony, address by Mr. Chamber-  
 lain, etc., 6, 7  
 Cordwaining : Mr. Chamberlain's  
 entry into father's business, 1852,  
 19  
 Corn Laws repeal agitation, 16;  
 Birmingham Support of Bright,  
 32, 34  
 Cowper, Lord : Resignation as Lord  
 Lieutenant of Ireland, 203  
 Cremer, Mr.—Forster's Education  
 Bill, 80  
 Crimes Act, 1887 : Mr. Chamberlain  
 on, speech at Ayr, scene in the  
 hall, 274; Provisions, Comparison  
 with Coercion Acts, 273  
 Criticism : Mr. Chamberlain's views  
 on, 123  
 Cromwell : Mr. Chamberlain's de-  
 fence of, Debating Society Pro-  
 position, 47  
 Cyprus, British acquisition of, 170  
*Daily Chronicle* :—  
   Home Rule Bill, comments on  
   Debate, etc., 231, 243, 244,  
   246  
   Workmen's Compensation Bill,  
   1897; comments on Mr.  
   Chamberlain's speech, 312  
*Daily News* :—  
   Attack on Mr. Chamberlain's  
   commercial policy, 1884,  
   41-44  
   Flogging in the army, Lord  
   Hartington's Bill, Mr. Cham-  
   berlain's attack, 168  
   Transvaal Crisis, hope for  
   peaceful settlement, 347

*Daily Telegraph* :—

Australian Commonwealth Bill:  
Mr. Chamberlain's career,  
391

Dale, Dr. :—

Arts Club, Birmingham, membership, 183, 184

Birmingham Municipal reforms, support, 100, 101, 102

Chamberlain, Mr., as Dr. Dale's Parliamentary representative, 102

Chamberlain's, Mr., electioneering campaign speeches, 1885; criticism, 225

Chamberlain's, Mr., secession from Gladstone Ministry, 260, 261

Death of, 426

Eastern Question, 169

Education Question, Forster's Bill, 85

Home Rule, 252, 262

Social life in Birmingham, change wrought by Home Rule controversy, 300

Dawson, Mr. G., support of municipal reform, Birmingham, 101, 102

Democratic constituency, Mr. Chamberlain's experiences, Glasgow speech, 1897, 401

Denbigh, Mr. Chamberlain's visit to, 197

Derby, Lord, resignation from office, 169

Diamond Jubilee Procession, Mr. Chamberlain's work regarding, 379, 383

Dickens, Charles, Birmingham workmen's testimonial, etc., 33

Dilke, Sir C. :—

President of the Local Government Board appointment, 210

Under-Secretary for War appointment, 175

Disestablishment, Mr. Chamberlain's views on, 139, 287

Dissenters :—

Birmingham as place of residence, effect of Five-Mile Act, 25

Dissenters (*cont.*) :—

Education disabilities: admittance to London University College School, 17, 19; Forster's Education Bill (*see* that title); Removal of, Interest of Mr. J. Chamberlain, senior, 15

Dissolution of Parliament (*see* Parliament)

Dixon, Mr. :—

Birmingham Education Society presidency, 77

Birmingham Parliamentary representative, 64, 227; Resignation in 1876, 137

Education Question, conference in 1869, 78

National Education League contribution, 76

Dock Strike, 1889, relief measures, 288

Domestic Legislation :—

Mr. Chamberlain's attention to, after appointment as Colonial Secretary, 309, 311; Press comments, 312

Irish obstruction between 1880 and 1885, 186, 191, 198

Programme for Parliamentary Session, 1900, 370

Rosebery Government Measures, 305, 306

Unionist Policy—Mr. Chamberlain's address to Constituents, election, 1900, 443, 444 (*see also* Tables of Dates and Events)

Dublin Honorary Degree, LL.D., conferred on Mr. Chamberlain, 369

Dutchmen at the Cape (*see* Cape Colony)

EASTERN QUESTION :—

Beaconsfield's, Lord, Policy, diversion of opinion, 168

British Fleet ordered to Constantinople, Resignation of Lords Carnarvon and Derby, 169

Gladstone on, Birmingham speech, 1877, 158

Eastern Question (*cont.*):—

Indian Native Troops ordered to Malta, transport cost, Mr. Chamberlain's question, 169, 170

Liberal Leader's views: Mr. Chamberlain's reference in *Fortnightly* article, 1877, 160, 161

Treaty of Berlin, British Acquisition of Cyprus, etc., 170

*Economist* on Home rule, Gladstone's offer to Parnell, 1886, 231

Edgar, Murder of, in the Transvaal, 341, 342

## Edgbaston Debating Society:—

Bright's speech, 1858, condemnation proposition, Mr. Chamberlain's support, 47, 48, 58

Chamberlain's, Mr., membership, speeches, etc., 47; Delivery of speeches, criticism, 53; Description by Mr. Matthews, 50; Influence on political career, 52; Press comments, 49, 50

Cromwell, character and conduct, proposition, Mr. Chamberlain's opposition, 47

Discussions noticed in Parliament, 48

Jubilee—Mr. Chamberlain's presidential address, 1896, 51

Membership list, 47

Volunteer corps proposal, 50, 54

## Edmonds, George:—

Birmingham Political Union support, 29

Brookfields Reform Demonstration, 1886, attendance, 61

Imprisonment in 1820, 29

## Education:—

Birmingham Education Society (*see that title*)

Birmingham facilities, 35, 45; Mr. Capel's statistics, 74; Mr. Chamberlain's work on Town Council, 82, 83; Free Education "Halfpenny Dinner" Organisation, 288; Scholarship founded by Mr. Chamberlain, 109

Education (*cont.*):—

Conference held at Birmingham, 1869, speech by Mr. Chamberlain, etc., 77, 78, 79

First grant in aid, 15

Forster's Education Bill (*see that title*)

Free education—Mr. Chamberlain's policy, 287, 288; Article on "Free Schools," 1877, 155; *Fortnightly* article, 94

Irish Catholics, Gladstone's attitude towards, in comparison with Nonconformists, 84

National Education League (*see that title*)

Sandon's, Lord, Bill, Mr. Chamberlain's first speech in House of Commons on, 143, 144

Voluntary schools, grant in aid 1896; Mr. Chamberlain's support and Nonconformist opposition, 288-90

## Education of Mr. Chamberlain:—

Canonbury School 1845-50, 16

London University College School, 1850-52, 17, 18

Pace's, Miss, school at Camberwell, 11-14

Political education (*see that title*)

School contemporaries, 19

University education, lack of Disabilities as a Dissenter, 19; Studies, etc., in compensation for, 87, 88

Egypt, Mr. Chamberlain's tour, study of condition of the country, 305

Egyptian question, British occupation of Egypt:—

Alexandria, bombardment of, 210 Chamberlain, Mr., on the relations between France and England, 210, 211

Gladstone Government views, 211

Gordon in the Soudan: Mr. Chamberlain on the withdrawal of Egyptian garrison, 212, 213; Death of Gordon, impression caused by, 213; Relief expedition, 213



Electioneering campaign programme 1885 (*see* "Unauthorised Programme")

Elections, Parliamentary (*see* Birmingham Constituencies, also General Elections)

Electoral Reform Congress, Mr. Chamberlain as delegate, 88, 89

Electric Lighting:—  
     Growth of the industry and Mr. Chamberlain's municipal work, 114  
     Municipal Power Act 1881, 187

Ellis, Mr. John, Pretoria Correspondence, South African War, 355

Endicott, Mr., death of: Birmingham resolution of sympathy with Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain, 403

Endicott, Miss: Marriage with Mr. Chamberlain, entertainments, etc., in honour of, 283, 285

Endicott family history, 283, 284

England and the Transvaal; table of dates, 1881-1900, 435-38

"English Radical Leaders" on Mr. Chamberlain's republican view, 90

Evans, Mr. S.:—  
     Birmingham election, 1868;  
     Conservative memorial card, 72  
     Irish Church Bill agitation, Birmingham meeting, 73

FACTORY Commissioners visit to Birmingham, 1833: Regulation of children's hours of labour, 35

Family and relatives of Mr. Chamberlain, 423-7 (*see* also Chamberlain Family)

Federated Empire (*see* Imperial Federation)

Fisheries dispute, America: Mr. Chamberlain elected as a British plenipotentiary, 278; Return to England, addresses presented, 279; Terms of the Treaty, 278, 279

Five-Mile Act: Settlement of Dissenters in Birmingham, 25

Flogging in the Army: Mr. Chamberlain's attack on Lord Hartington's Bill, 168

Foreign and Colonial policy (*see* Colonial and Foreign Policy)

*Fortnightly* Articles:—  
     Gothenburg system of municipal public houses: Account of tour in Sweden, 147  
     Labourers' and Artisans' dwellings, 290, 291  
     Liberal Federation, 1877, "The New Organisation" and "The Caucus," 160-62  
     Liberal Party and its leaders, 1873, 91-95  
     List of Articles published, 439  
     Local Government and Ireland, 1885, practical working of the "Castle," 293, 294  
     Municipal Elections: Contests fought on political grounds, 268  
     Next page of the Liberal programme, 96

Forster, Mr.:—  
     Birmingham Education Society, statistics, 77  
     Irish Question: Conciliation policy, opposition, 203; Parnell's reading of letter to Mr. Gladstone in House of Commons, omission of sentence, exposure, 205, 206

Forster's Education Bill:—  
     Chamberlain, Mr., on, Birmingham Town Hall meeting, 1870, 81  
     Collings, Mr. J., on, 83  
     National Education League attitude, observations by Mr. Chamberlain, 80, 81  
     Passing as law, 82  
     Repeal of 25th Clause agitation: Chamberlain and Dale Campaign, 85, 86; Deputations to Gladstone and Forster, 84, 85; Liberal candidates in support of repeal, elections 1874, 85

France and the Egyptian Question, Mr. Chamberlain on, 210, 211

Franchise, extension movement, 1883-84:—  
     Mr. Chamberlain's speeches, 192, 193  
     Re-distribution Bill, 1885, 197

## Franchise Bill, 1884 :—

Debate in House of Commons,  
Mr. Chamberlain's speech,  
194-6

Introduction and passing as law,  
191, 194, 197

Rejection by House of Lords,  
public protest, etc., 196, 197

Franchise and education, Birmingham Education Conference consideration, 1869, 78, 79

Free Church, Free Labour, Free Land, Free Schools, Mr. Chamberlain's programmes :—

Consideration of, 287, 288, 310  
Liberal programme and *Fortnightly* articles, 91-95, 155

Unauthorised programme, 1885,  
"Ransom" speech, 217-19

"Free Schools," Mr. Chamberlain's article on, 155

Freeth, verse on Birmingham, 27, 35

French Republic, establishment of,  
Mr. Chamberlain's congratulations, 88

French, study of, by Mr. Chamberlain, 46

GARDENING hobby, orchids at Highbury, etc., 54, 421

Gas, Water, and Improvement Schemes, Birmingham, 110, 112

Gasworks, corporation purchase,  
Mr. Chamberlain's scheme,  
speech, etc., 110-13; Ratepayers' meeting, 113; Result of purchase, review by Mr. Chamberlain, 114

Improvement Scheme : Alterations made, 118; Mr. Chamberlain's speech as Mayor, 1874, 132, 133; contributions to Trust Fund, 123; Explanation of plan, 119-21; criticism, Mr. Chamberlain's answer, 122, 123; Sanitary condition of the town, 120, 121

Parliamentary Bills, Royal assent, 115, 117

Ratepayers' letter to Mr. Chamberlain, 141

Vote of thanks to Mr. Chamberlain, 115

Gas, Water, etc. (*cont.*) :—

Water works : Corporation purchase, 110-12; Cost and necessity for purchase, 116, 117; Criticism of negotiations, 117, 118; Evidence given by Mr. Chamberlain. House of Commons, 117; Result of purchase, 118

## General Elections :—

Election 1874 : Mr. Chamberlain stands for Sheffield, 95; Liberal candidates in support of Repeal of 25th Clause, Forster's Bill, 85; "Vote-as-you're-told" Committee—Accusation against Mr. Chamberlain, 96, 97.

Election 1880 : Liberal Federation Work, success of, 171; Liberal leaders summoned to Windsor, 174; Resignation of Lord Beaconsfield, 173, 174; Returns, Liberal majority, etc., 173, 174

Election 1885 : Returns, strength of the parties and the support of the Irish Vote, 226-28

Election 1886 : Campaign previous to, addresses, etc., 238, 239; Home Rule a Party Question, comments, 261, 262; Irish Vote and Home Rule; Position of the Liberal party, 238; Radical Union Organisation, 267; Returns, 267

Election 1892 : Return of Mr. Austen Chamberlain for East Worcestershire, 298; Returns, 298, 301

Election 1895 : Returns, 308; Unionist Candidates' addresses, criticism by Mr. Chamberlain in 1897, 311

Election 1900 : Dissolution of Parliament, 404

Returns of elections 1885—1895, Table, Formation of the Midland Unionist Association, 301 (*see also* Birmingham Constituencies)

Germany and Great Britain, rela-

tions between, Mr. Chamberlain's "Leicester" speech, 336; Criticism, 367-68

Gladstone, Mr. :—

- British Democracy, devotion to, 258
- Chamberlain's, Mr. Austen, Maiden Speech, House of Commons, criticism, 299, 300
- Colonial Policy, speech 1896, 380
- Eastern Question, Birmingham Speech, 1867, 158; Mr. Chamberlain's *Fortnightly* article reference, 160
- Education Question: Forster's Bill, deputations, 84; Irish Catholics, attitude towards, in comparison with Nonconformists, 84
- General Election 1880: Attendance of Mr. Gladstone at Windsor, 174
- General Election 1886: Home Rule a Party Question, 261, 262; Irish Church Bill Agitation, 68, 71
- Irish Question: Accusation against Parnell, disturbed state of Ireland, 245; "Ireland within distance of Civil War," 200; O'Shea's, Captain, letter, reply, 203, 204; Parnell's compact, letter read to Mr. Gladstone in the House, omission of sentence, 205, 206 (*see also* Home Rule)
- Leadership of the Liberal party, Birmingham Association vote of confidence, 1886, 255
- Meeting with Mr. Chamberlain after retirement from public life, 409
- Reform Bill (2nd), 1866, introduction of, 60
- Resignations from office, 214, 215, 304
- Visit to Birmingham, Liberal Federation, 1877, 156-60
- Visit to Mr. Chamberlain at Southbourne, 131

Gladstone Administration :—

Mr. Chamberlain's secession from, conditional acceptance of office, etc. : Mr. Chamberlain's letters to Mr. Gladstone on acceptance and resignation of office, 236, 240; Chances of reconciliation, 276; Criticism on withdrawal, accusations of unworthy motives, etc., Mr. Chamberlain's defence, 258, 259; Dr. Dale on, 260, 261; Effect of resignation, 249; Explanation to constituents, 1886, 238-39, 252-56; Explanation in the House of Commons, 240, 246, 248; References to, 57, 95

Government of, 1880-85 : Cabinet appointments, 175, 210; Defeat in 1885, 213, 214; Attitude of the Liberal party, 215; Mr. Gladstone's appeal on the Seats Bill, note handed to Sir S. Northcote, 216; Resignation of Mr. Gladstone, 214, 215; Salisbury Cabinet formation, 215; Egyptian Question policy, 211, 212; Effect of General Gordon's death, 213; Foreign and colonial complications of Great Britain on Liberal access to power, 209; Irish party and the Irish Question, Mr. McCarthy on, 198; Transvaal, settlement of (*see* Transvaal)

Government of 1886: Cabinet appointments, etc., 230, 231

Government of 1892: Programme, measures promised in the Queen's speech, 306; Resignation of Mr. Gladstone, 1894, 304; Strength of the parties, 301

Home Rule (*see* that title): Division of the Liberal Party (*see* Liberal Party)

Resignation proposals by Mr. Chamberlain, 191, 224

- Glasgow — Mr. Chamberlain's visits :—  
 Electioneering campaign, 1885 ; speech, 222  
 Experience as a Parliamentary candidate in a democratic constituency, speech, 1897, 401
- Glasgow University Lord Rectorship : Nomination, etc., of Mr. Chamberlain, 317-20
- Gordon, Gen., in the Soudan, 1884 :—  
 Chamberlain, Mr., on the withdrawal of Egyptian troops, 212, 213  
 Relief Expedition and death of Gordon, 213
- Goschen, Mr., secession from Liberal-Unionist party, appointment in Conservative Cabinet, 1886, 271
- Gothenburg system of municipal public-houses : Mr. Chamberlain's advocacy for  
 Arts Club, Birmingham, discussions, 183  
 Cartoons, Mr. Chamberlain as a "publican," 172  
 Later opinions on temperance reform : Grosvenor House meeting, 1894, 151  
 Speech in the House of Commons, 151 ; Press comments, 153-54  
 Tour in Sweden and proposals to Birmingham Town Council, 147-51
- Government Appointments (*see* Cabinet and Government Appointments)
- Government obligations to the poor, Mr. Chamberlain's opinion, 222
- Grenfell, Mr. H. R. . Attack on Mr. Chamberlain's commercial policy, 41, 42
- Grier, Rev. R. M. : Press attack on Mr. Chamberlain's commercial policy, defence, 41
- HACKNEY : Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 1885, 219
- Harben, Sir H., connection with Chamberlain Family, 9
- Harcourt, Sir W. :—  
 Australian Commonwealth Bill, 308  
 South African War, debate, 1899, Attack on Colonial Office negotiations, 361  
 Visit to Mr. Chamberlain at Southbourne, 131
- Hartington, Lord :—  
 Chamberlain's, Mr., attitude towards "Late Leader of the Liberal Party, etc., description, 167, 168, 174 ; Speech at London Liberal Union Club, 1887 ; Confidence in Lord Hartington, 276  
 General Election, 1880 : Attendance of Lord Hartington at Windsor, 174  
 Home Rule policy : Attitude on defeat of Government, 1886, 230  
 Liberal Federation, 1877, alleged hostility, Mr. Chamberlain's defence, 163
- Hawkesley Correspondence : Jameson Raid Inquiry :—  
 Colonial Office alleged complicity : Mr. Chamberlain's position, consideration of, 332 ; Chartered Company communications with Colonial Office, object of, 329, 330  
 Inquiry Report—Debate in the House of Commons, 330-32  
 Leyds, Dr., and the publication of stolen letters, 335  
 Missing telegrams, explanation, Mr. Rhodes's refusal to produce copies, 331-32
- Highbury (Birmingham), Mr. Chamberlain's residence at, 180  
 Description of house, etc., 417-422 ; *Town Crier* letter and working man's opinions on, 181  
 Visitors to, 420
- Highbury (London), home life of the Chamberlain Family, 14, 20, 21
- Historical Retrospect : Period previous to Victorian Era, 15

## Home Rule :—

Campaign against, after Election, 1886, 269; Radical Union Inaugural Meeting, speech by Mr. Chamberlain, 269; Radical Union Programme, 270; Tory and Liberal-Unionist coalition, 271

Chamberlain's Mr., policy, substitute for Home Rule, 237; Address to constituents, electioneering campaign, 1886, 238, 270; Birmingham Liberal Association resolutions in support of, 255; Explanation to constituents after withdrawal from office, 252-55; Impression on constituents, 256; *Times* on, 256; Principles of, 237; Definition of Gladstone's Home Rule policy, 247, 248; Radical Unionist programme, 1886, 270; Resignation of office, (*see* Gladstone Administration); Mr. Schnadhorst and the National Liberal Federation attitude, 267; Success of programme, measures passed in 1899, etc., 315, 316; "Stability of the Empire," Mr. Chamberlain's appeal speech at Birmingham election, 1886, 262-64; Ulster campaign, 277; Unionist party support, 317 (*see* also Home Rule Bills)

Decline of, influence of Parnell's fall, 297

Definition of the phrase "Home Rule," Mr. Chamberlain's explanation, speech in the House of Commons, 1886, 247, 248; Extension of meaning by Mr. Gladstone in 1886, 231

Irish People, attitude of, Mr. Chamberlain on, 269

Irish Plan of Campaign: State of Ireland and the "Physical Force Party," 273, 274

Home Rule (*cont.*):—

Liberal enthusiasm, abatement in 1899, observations by Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, 317

Liberal Party division (*see* coalition Liberal Party)

Liberal-Unionist and Tory (*see* that title)

Parliamentary Elections, Home Rule a party question, Mr. Gladstone's comments, 216, 262

Parnell's programme, 1885, Mr. Chamberlain's criticism, 223

Prospects after defeat of second Bill: Mr. Dillon on, 304; Effect of Liberal Party division, 304, 305

Rumours of Home Rule in 1885: *Standard* publication of alleged scheme by Mr. Gladstone, 228; Mr. Chamberlain's comments on, 229; Position of Parnell, 231, 232; Press comments, 231

Salisbury Government defeat, 1886, Liberal members voting against own party, 230, 242

War and the effect of Home Rule, reference by Mr. Chamberlain, Debate on second Bill, 302, 303

## Home Rule Bill, 1886 :—

Chamberlain's, Mr., opposition: Abuse after defeat of Bill, Gladstonian attacks on Mr. Chamberlain, 260, 261; Principal objections, 234, 235; Letters to Mr. Gladstone on acceptance and resignation of office, 237, 240; Speech in the House of Commons, 240; Resignation of office (*see* Gladstone Administration); Speeches in the House of Commons, 246-48, 258-60

Conservative attitude: Liberal-Unionist and Tory coalition (*see* that title); Opera House and "May Meetings," formation of "Loyal and Patriotic Union," 256

Home Rule Bill, 1886 (*cont.*):—

Gladstone's manifesto to Liberal party, 256, 257

Introduction, Debate: Chamberlain's speech, 246-48; Gladstone's speech, influence on the Liberal party, 245, 246; Members securing seats, scene in the House of Commons, 244, 245

Liberal Party division (*see* Liberal Party)

"May Meetings": Meeting at Mr. Chamberlain's house, etc., 256, 257

Modifications made, conciliation of Liberal members, 243

Outline of the Cabinet consideration, observations by Mr. Chamberlain, 237, 239

Press comments, 243, 244

Second reading: Debate, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, etc., 257-60; Defeat of Bill, dissolution of Parliament, 260; Preparations for defeat, 257

## Home Rule (second) Bill, 1893:—

Chamberlain's, Mr., opposition: Defeat of the Bill, 304; *Nineteenth Century* article, "A Bill for the Weakening of Great Britain," 305; Speech in the House of Commons, 302, 303

Debate: Members securing seats—scene in the House of Commons, 301; Speeches, 302, 303

Defeat of the Bill: Rejection by House of Lords, 303, 304; Impression on the country, *Truth* on, etc., 304

Land Question, provision, consideration of, 310

## Honorary Degrees conferred on Mr.

Chamberlain, 317, 369, 416

## Hopwood, Mr.: Reference to Mr. Chamberlain's Maiden Speech, House of Commons, 144

## House of Commons:—

Chamberlain, Mr., taking his seat, 141, 142, 145

House of Commons (*cont.*):—

Grand Committees, appointment of: Support of idea by Mr. Chamberlain, 187

Procedure, new rules, Mr. Chamberlain's support, 186

## House of Lords, Power of:—

Attitude of the House on the Franchise Question, criticism by Mr. Chamberlain, 193, 196, 197

Mr. Chamberlain's antipathy to, accusation by Sir. S. Northcote, defence, 197

Rosebery agitation against, 306

## Houses (acquisition of small houses)

Bill (*see* Acquisition of Small Houses Bill)

## Housing of the Poor: Royal commission, evidence, 290

## Housing of the Working Classes Amendment Act, 1890, 291

Housing of the Working Classes: Mr. Chamberlain's article in the *Fortnightly*, 291

## Hull: Mr. Chamberlain's visit, 1885, speech on Merchant Shipping Bill, 190

## IMPERIAL concerns, development of, Mr. Chamberlain's alleged abandonment of Home Legislation for, 309, 311

## Imperial Federation, Mr. Chamberlain's views, etc.:—

Australian Commonwealth Bill (*see* that title)

Colonial assistance in South African War, influence on, 385, 386

Congress of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, Proposed Commercial Union, 1896, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 384

Gladstone's and Bright's attitude toward Colonial expansion, 380

Significance of the Diamond Jubilee Procession, 383

"Trustees of the interests of the Empire," Mr. Chamberlain's

- Imperial Federation, Mr. Chamberlain's views, etc. (*cont.*):—  
 speech, Debate on the Address, 1900, 374; Mr. Asquith's reference to—Debate on Australian Commonwealth Bill, 390
- Improvement Scheme, Birmingham (*see* Gas, Water, and Improvement Schemes)
- Individualism and Party: Mr. Chamberlain's article on Liberal Federation, 1877, 162
- Ipswich: Mr. Chamberlain's speech, "Unauthorised Programme" Campaign, 1885, 219
- Ireland:—  
 "Agriculture, department of, established 1899, 316  
 Balfour's, Mr. A., administration, 273; Tour of Mr. Balfour in 1899, establishment of Congested Districts Board, etc., 294, 295  
 Chamberlain's, Mr., visit to Ulster, 277  
 Home Rule (*see* that title)  
 Land League: Arrest and release of Parnell and other Leaders, Suppression of League, 202, 203; Objects of the League, 201; Substitution of Ladies' Land League, 202  
 Land Question: Bills (*see* Irish Land Act, 1881, etc.), Plan of Campaign, Parnell and the "Physical Force Party," 273, 274  
 National League, suppression of, Imprisonment of Members, 1887, 275, 276  
 Parliamentary representation, Mr. Chamberlain on, 195  
 Parnell Commission, 1888 (*see* that title)  
 Relief of distress, 1899, Unionist Measures, 316 (*see also* Irish question)
- Irish Church Bill Agitation:—  
 Birmingham Meetings, 68-73; Conservative Resolution, platform scene, 72, 73
- Irish Church Bill Agitation (*cont.*):—  
 Bright's Letter—Birmingham Town Hall Meeting, 1869, 69  
 Chamberlain's, Mr., speech, 1869, 69, 70  
 Gladstone, Mr., on, 71  
 House of Lords' attitude, 70
- Irish Land Act, 1881:—  
 Attitude of the Irish, Mr. Chamberlain on, 200  
 Passing as Law: Agitation Act by Parnell and others, 201  
 Provisions of, 201
- Irish Land Act, 1887: Arrears of rent composition, Mr. Chamberlain's proposal, 276
- Irish Land Bill, 1896: Comparison with Home Rule Bill, 1893, etc., 315, 316, 317
- Irish Land Purchase (Balfour's) Act, 1891: Working of, 294
- Irish Land Purchase Bill, 1886:—  
 Mr. Chamberlain's speeches to constituents, 239, 254  
 Gladstone's manifesto, 257  
 Introduction of, expenditure of English money and the Home Rule Question, 238; Speech by Mr. Chamberlain, 248
- Irish Legislation:—  
 Measures passed, Unionists Lists, 296, 315  
 Obstruction to Domestic Legislation, 186, 191, 198, 307, 308
- Irish Local Government (Balfour's) Bill, 1892  
 Debate on second reading: Mr. O'Brien's offer and Mr. Chamberlain's reply, 295
- Irish Local Government (Balfour's) Bill, 1898  
 Substitute for Home Rule, Mr. Redmond's objection, Mr. Balfour's reply, 316
- Irish Question:—  
 Chamberlain's position, 1880—1885: Alleged alliance with Parnell, 199; Speech by Mr. Chamberlain at Newcastle, 1884, 207  
 Civil War, "Ireland within distance of," Mr. Gladstone's assertion, 200

Irish Question (*cont.*):—

Coercion or conciliation of Ireland, 1880-85, 198; Chamberlain's views, 200, 203, 206; Obedience to Constitutional Law, 199; Mr. J. MacCarthy on, 198; Capt. O'Shea's letters to Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Gladstone—replies, 203-204; Parnell's Plans: Accusation against Mr. Gladstone, 245; Letter read in the House of Commons, scene caused by, 205, 206; Liberal leaders, treatment of, 206; Phoenix Park murders, effect on negotiations, 203, 296  
 Compensation for Disturbances Bill, 1880: Rejection of, Mr. Chamberlain on, 200

Disordered state of Ireland, cause of, 200

Home Rule (*see* that title)

Local Government Schemes: Mr. Chamberlain's *Fortnightly* Article, 1885: "Practical Working of the Castle," etc., 293, 294; Mr. Chamberlain's Home Rule policy (*see* Home Rule); Gladstone's alleged Scheme, 1885, 228; Irish Local Government (Balfour's) Bill (*see* that title); Judgment of the Irish people, Mr. Chamberlain on, 269; Measures promised in 1887, 273; Radical Unionist programme after defeat of Home Rule Bill, 270; Unionist policy for Ireland: *Birmingham Daily Post* Articles, 282

Obstruction of Parliamentary business, 186, 191, 198, 307, 308

Parnell's attitude: Coercion or conciliation (*see* that sub-heading); Policy with American Separatists, 202; Visit to America, results of, 292; Programme, 1885, Mr. Chamberlain's criticism, 222

Phoenix Park murders, effect on negotiations, 203-6

Irish Question (*cont.*):—

Plan of campaign, "Physical Force Party," etc., 273, 274; Parnell Commission Report, 1888—Debate, 293

Position of the Irish Question, 1888, Review by Mr. Chamberlain, 280, 281

Redistribution of Seats Bill: Parnell's hope of utilising as means for furthering scheme, 207

Salisbury Government defeat, 1886, attitude of the House, 230

"JACK CADE"—title given to Mr. Chamberlain after electioneering campaign, 1885, 224, 407

## Jameson Raid:—

Mr. Chamberlain's negotiations: Abrogation of the London Convention and Jameson's release, Pretoria cable, Mr. Chamberlain's telegram to Mr. Hofmeyer, 326, 327; Birmingham approval: Mr. Chamberlain's address to constituents after the Raid, 327, 328; Cause of the Raid, Kruger's reply to Despatch, 328; Colonial Office alleged complicity (*see* Jameson Raid Inquiry); Instruction to stop Jameson: Conduct of Sir H. Robinson, 324, 325; Message to Dr. Jameson ignored by Raiders, 325; Suppression of Raid, attitude taken by Mr. Chamberlain; explanation and demand for Inquiry, 328, 329

Claim for damages: Kruger's duplicity, 325, 326

Consequences of the Raid, 336, 339

German Emperor's congratulatory telegram to Kruger, 327

Orange Free State attitude, negotiations between Presidents Steyn and Kruger, 326

Origin and cause of the Raid movement, 321, 323, 328



Jameson Raid (*cont.*):—

National Reform Union and the raiders' negotiation: letter to Dr. Jameson, *Times* publication, etc., 323, 324; Trial of Reform Committee members, 326

Reference to the Raid by Mr. Chamberlain: Glasgow University Rectorial Address, 1897, 319

Surrender of raiders to Com. Cronje: conditions of surrender concealed, Kruger's duplicity, 325, 326

## Jameson Raid Inquiry:—

Attempt to reopen inquiry, Mr. Chamberlain's refusal, Debate, etc., 333-6

Chamberlain's, Mr., speech in the House of Commons, Judicial Commission proposal, 329

Colonial Office alleged complicity with Raid: Mr. Chamberlain's position, consideration of, 332; Hawkesley correspondence, object of Chartered Company negotiations with Colonial Office, 329, 330; Inquiry report, missing telegrams, Debate in the House, 331, 332; Dr. Leyds and the publication of stolen letters, 335

Composition of Committee of Inquiry, 329: Mr. Hawkesley, alleged communication with members, 331

Labouchere's minority report, 330

Report: Presentation and Debate in the House of Commons, 330, 332; Mr. Rhodes' conduct, condemnation of, Mr. Chamberlain on, 333, 334

Johnson, Rev. A., Mr. Chamberlain's recollections of, 17

Johnston, Sir H., education at Camberwell, 13, 14

KENRICK, MR., Birmingham Parlia-

mentary representative, 1885, 227, 228

Kenrick, Miss Florence: Marriage with Mr. Chamberlain, 1869, 87

Kenrick, Miss H.: Marriage with Mr. Chamberlain, 1861, 54

Kenrick Family:—

Birmingham Improvement Enterprises, etc., contributions, 54

Marriage connections with Chamberlain family, 54, 55, 87

National Education League contributions, 76

Key, Dr., Headmaster of London University College School, Mr. Orme on, 18

Kimberley, Lord: South African War, Debate, 1899, 360

King Edward VI. Foundation, Chamberlain scholarship, 109

Kossuth, Louis: Birmingham citizens' presentation to, 34

Kruger, President:—

Elected President of the Transvaal, 209

Invitation to settlers for the Transvaal, financial difficulties, 1884, 321, 322

Jameson Raid (*see that title*)

Salisbury's, Lord, impression of, speech during Debate on South African War, 360, 363

Visit to England, 1884, protest against Pretoria Convention, 210

(*See also* Transvaal Crisis, South African War)

LABOUCHERE, MR.:—

Jameson Raid Inquiry, 330, 331

South African War: Discovery of Pretoria correspondence, 355, 358

Labour Question, Mr. Chamberlain's articles on:—

*Fortnightly* article, 1873, 93

*Nineteenth Century*, 1892, 305

Labourers' and artisans' dwellings; *Fortnightly* article, 291

Land Question, Mr. Chamberlain on:—

Compensation for compulsory purchase, 290, 291

Free Land, *Fortnightly* article, 93

Housing of the working classes (*see that title*)

Ireland (*see that title*)

Municipal Corporation's difficulty to obtain land, *Fortnightly* article, 290

Rochdale speech, 164

Law: Obedience to Constitutional Law, Mr. Chamberlain on, 199

"Leicester" Speech, 1899:—

Home Rule and the creation of new Political Party, reference to, 401

South African War and the British Relations with Germany and America, 365-7; criticism, 367-8

Leicester Speech, 1900: "Sentiment ruling the World," 39

Leyds, Dr.: Jameson Raid Inquiry, Publication of stolen letters, 335

Suzerainty Question, Transvaal, 343

Liberal Associations:—

Birmingham Liberal Association (*see that title*)

Franchise Extension, fight for in 1883-4, 193

Liberal Federation (*see that title*)

Liberal Creed: Fundamental Principles, Mr. Chamberlain on, 163

Liberal Federation, 1877:—

Bright's Support, speech at Rochdale, 164, 165

Gladstone's visit to Birmingham: Reception, Bingley Hall Meeting, 156; Speeches by Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain, 158, 159, 160

Home Rule, Support of Mr. Gladstone's Bill, 257, 267

Hostility of Lord Hartington and Official Leaders alleged, Mr. Chamberlain's defence, 163

Liberal Federation (*cont.*):—

Methods and aim of the New Organisation, Mr. Chamberlain's *Fortnightly* article, 160-62

Rochdale Meeting, Mr. Bright's and Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches, 164, 165

Schnadhorst's, Mr., Influence on perfection of Organisation, 165, 267

Test of Organisation at General Election, 1880, 171

Liberal Government (*see Gladstone Administration, Rosebery Administration*)

Liberal Party:—

Bright's, Mr., example and advice, Mr. Chamberlain's recommendation to Party, 163

Chamberlain, Mr., 'dictating terms to, Accusation during electioneering Campaign, 224

Chamberlain's, Mr., political position, Lord Rosebery on, 408

Dissolution of the National Education League, 1877—

Liberal party to carry on work, suggestion, 155, 156

Division of party on Home Rule, 230, 242, 243; Birmingham Liberals and Mr. Chamberlain, Meeting for discussion of points of difference, 402; Birmingham Municipal Elections, effect on, 267, 268; Chances of reconciliation, Mr. Chamberlain on, 258, 259, 276; Creation of New Political Party, Mr. Chamberlain's Leicester speech, 401; Effect on History of the Home Rule Movement, 304, 305; Liberal-Unionist and Tory Coalition (*see that title*); Line of division, Mr. Chamberlain on, 281, 282; Review of Position of Parties, 1888, Mr. Chamberlain's Bradford speech, "Union of Hearts," 280-82; Round Table Conference,

Liberal Party (*cont.*):—

- 1887, 272; Mr. Schnadhorst, and Mr. Chamberlain, severance of Political Ties between, 165, 267; Secession from Gladstone Govt. (*see* Gladstone Administration)
- Eastern Question, views of Liberal Leaders, Mr. Chamberlain's reference to, 160, 161
- Gladstone Administration (*see* that title)
- Gladstone, Mr., as Leader, Birmingham Liberal Association vote of confidence, 1887, 225
- Official Programme, 1885, Criticism by Mr. Chamberlain, 220, 221
- Organisation of, 1877-80, 155
- Parnell and Home Rule, alleged negotiations, 1885, *Standard* publication, 228, 229; Press Comments, 231
- Radical Members' Difficulties, Mr. Chamberlain on, 225
- Salisbury Govt. defeat, 1886, Liberal Members voting against own Party, 230, 242, 243
- Unauthorised Programme of Mr. Chamberlain, 1885 (*see* that title)
- "Liberal Party and its leaders," Mr. Chamberlain's article in the *Fortnightly*, 1873, 91-95
- Liberal Policy: Radical attitude, "Pace of the Coach," Mr. Chamberlain on, 226
- Liberal Programme:—
  - Advanced Liberal programme, Mr. Chamberlain's speech to Ward Electors, 1872, 91-2
  - Fortnightly* Article, "The Next Page of the Liberal Programme," 96
- Liberal strength in Midland counties, General Election Table, 1885-95, 301
  - Advanced Liberal: Definition of term by Mr. Chamberlain, 91, 92
  - Aim of: Mr. Chamberlain on the ultimate aim of Liberalism, 139

Liberalism:—

- Birmingham Liberalism, Principles of, Mr. Chamberlain on, 138
- Chamberlain's, Mr., views, influences affecting, 62, 63
- Liberal-Unionist, Mr. Chamberlain's life as, Book IV., 265
- Liberal-Unionist and Tory Coalition, 271
  - Chamberlain, Mr., on, 272; Review of position of parties, 1888: Mr. Chamberlain's Bradford Speech, "Union of Hearts," 281, 282
  - Division of Liberal Party, the origin of, 230, 242, 243
  - Permanence of the Alliance, consideration of, 405
  - Salisbury Government, 1895, appointments, etc., 308, 309
  - Success of coalition, Mr. Chamberlain's relations with colleagues, 406-408
- Liberal-Unionists:—
  - Annual Conference, Mr. Chamberlain's "Leicester" speech, 365-67; Criticism on, 367-68
  - Coalition with Conservatives (*see* Liberal-Unionist and Tory Coalition)
  - Election addresses, 1895, criticism by Mr. Chamberlain, 1897, 311
  - Home Rule: Division of Liberal Party (*see* Liberal Party); Policy (*see* Home Rule)
  - Irish Legislation (*see* that title; *also* Irish Question)
  - Legislation, Table of Measures passed, 1888-92, 286, 287, 296
  - Policy of the Liberal-Unionists: Birmingham Support: Resolutions passed at Liberal Association Meeting, 255, 256; Return of seven members, Election, 1886, 262; Home Rule, Irish Question, etc. (*see* those titles); Programme, 1886: Mr. Chamberlain's Election address, etc., 270
  - Radical Union Formation (*see* that title)

- Licensing Reform (*see* Gothenburg System of Municipal Public Houses)
- Life as a Liberal M.P., 1876-86, Book III., 135
- Life as a Liberal-Unionist, Book IV., 265
- Life in Birmingham, commercial and municipal work, 1854-76, Book II., 23
- Life in London, 1836-54, Book I., 1
- Lloyd, Mr. S. :—  
     Birmingham Election, 1868, Conservative memorial card, 72; Irish Church Bill agitation, Birmingham meeting, 72, 73
- Local Government :—  
     Chamberlain's, Mr., "Unauthorised Programme" (*see* Unauthorised Programme)  
     Irish Question (*see* that title)
- Local Government Bill, 1892 (*see* Irish Local Government (Balfour's) Bill)
- Local Government Board :—  
     Chamberlain's, Mr., Presidency, Gladstone Ministry, 1886: Conditional acceptance of office, 230, 235; Explanation in the House of Commons, 246, 248; Letters of acceptance and resignation, 236, 240, 242; Motives attributed for withdrawal, Mr. Chamberlain's defence, 258, 259; Dr. Dale's Letters, 260, 261; Speech to constituents, 238, 240; Term of office, 137
- Dilke's, Sir C., appointment, 210
- London :—  
     Chamberlain's, Mr., private life in, 415-17; Early life in London, 1
- Electioneering Campaign, 1885, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 224
- London Liberal Union Club : Mr. Chamberlain's expression of confidence in Lord Hartington, etc., 276
- London University College : Dissenters' sons graduating in 1885, 298
- London University College School : Dissenters' admittance, etc., Mr. T. Orme on, 17, 18
- Education of Mr. Chamberlain at, 17, 18
- Lucy, Mr. H. W. : Mr. Chamberlain's Maiden Speech, House of Commons, 143, 145
- MAIDEN SPEECHES :—  
     Birmingham Liberal Election Committee Dinner, 1868, 67
- House of Commons, 143-46
- Malaria, Investigations in West Africa, Mr. Chamberlain's interest in, 383
- Marriage of Mr. Chamberlain :—  
     First Marriage : Miss H. Kenrick, 54; Death of Mrs. Chamberlain, 54
- Second Marriage : Miss F. Kenrick, 87; Death of Mrs. Chamberlain, 128, 129
- Third Marriage : Miss Endicott, entertainments, etc., in honour of, 283-85
- Mason, Sir J. : Foundation of Birmingham Mason Science Coll. 394
- Matthews, Mr. C. E. :—  
     Birmingham School Board, Review of Mr. Chamberlain's work, 82
- Edgbaston Debating Society : Discussions noticed in Parliament, reference by, 48; Election of Mr. Chamberlain as Member, description of, 50
- Forster's Education Bill, Deputation to Mr. Gladstone, 84
- Matthews, Mr. H., Parliamentary Representative for Birmingham, 262
- Mayoralty of Birmingham, Mr. Chamberlain in Office (*see* Municipal Work)
- Maxse, General, visit to Mr. Chamberlain at Southborne, 131
- McCarthy, Mr. J. : The Irish and the Irish Party under Gladstone's Rule, 198

## Members of Parliament :—

Chamberlain, Mr., as M.P. (*see* titles Parliamentary and Political Career, Birmingham Constituencies)

Duty of a Member, Mr. Chamberlain on, 140

Table of Members returned at General Elections, 1885-95, 301

## Merchant Shipping Bill :—

Chamberlain's, Mr., speech in the House, Second Reading, 190

Deputation from Associated Chambers of Shipping, 189

Difficulties and reasons for opposition, 188, 189

Hull Meeting, Mr. Chamberlain's Speech, 1885, 190

Withdrawal of Bill : Mr. Chamberlain's, proposed resignation after, 190, 191; Royal Commission appointed, 1884, 190

Merriman, Mr. : Transvaal Crisis, Pretoria Correspondence, 355

Midland Counties, Liberal strength, Table of Members returned at General Election 1885-95, 301

Midland Liberal-Unionist Association, Formation of, 301

Military System, deficiencies in, Mr. Chamberlain on, Election Address, 1900, 443

Milner, Sir A., Appointment as High Commissioner for South Africa :—

Chamberlain's, Mr., Speech, 338, 339

Duties of, investigation into Outlanders' grievances, etc., 340

Transvaal Crisis (*see* that title)

"Modern Ulysses" : Birmingham *Town Crier* on Mr. Chamberlain's defeat, Sheffield Election, 96

Montagu, Lord R., Attack on Birmingham Education Society, 76, 77

Moral Law and the Influence of the People, Mr. Bright's reference, 58, 59

Morley, Mr. J., Friendship with Mr. Chamberlain, 19, 131

Motto, *L'audace*, etc., proposal by Edgbaston Debating Society Member, 53

Mundella, Mr. : Sheffield Constituency, Mr. Chamberlain's candidature, 95, 96

Municipal Corporation Acts, passing as Law, 15

Municipal Corporations and the difficulty of acquisition of Land, Mr. Chamberlain's *Fortnightly* article, 290

## Municipal Elections :—

Contests fought on political grounds, Mr. Chamberlain's *Fortnightly* article, 268

Home Rule and the Liberal Party division, effect on elections 1886, 267, 268

Municipal Institutions, Mr. Chamberlain's opinion of, 104

Municipal Public Houses (*see* Göthenberg System of Municipal Public Houses)

Municipal Reform, Birmingham Demonstration, 1836, 32

Municipal Work in Birmingham :— Chamberlain Memorial, erection of, 168

Electric Lighting Industry : Growth of, Mr. Chamberlain's under-estimation of, 114; Municipal Powers Act, 1881, 187

Gas, Water and Improvement Scheme (*see* that title)

Mayoralty : Mr. Chamberlain in office ; Comparison between political and municipal work, 95, 96 ; Council House, foundation stone ceremony, 104, 105 ; Election as Mayor, 1873, 99, 100 ; *Fortnightly* Article on the Liberal Party, 1873 ; effect of, 95 ; General work as Mayor, meetings, etc., 103, 109 ; Highgate Park, opening ceremony, 107, 101 ; Prince of Wales's visit : Reception by Mr. Chamberlain, 88 ; Resignation proposals after death of Mrs. Chamberlain, 129 ; Result of

Municipal Work (*cont.*):—

- schemes, etc., 132; Speech to working men, first Mayoral year, 132
  - Nonconformist Ministers' support, Dr. Dale and others on, 100, 101, 102
  - Popularity of Mr. Chamberlain, 125, 140
  - Political and municipal work: Relations between, previous to entry into Parliament, 97-8
  - Town Council: Mr. Chamberlain as member, 82; Abuse of Mr. Chamberlain's confidence, scene at Town Council Meeting, 126; Mr. Chamberlain's demand for advanced Liberal programme, 91, 92; Corporation officials' salaries, 132; Death of Mrs. Chamberlain, message of condolence—Reply, 128, 129; Gothenburg System of publichouses, Mr. Chamberlain's proposals, 147-51; Mayoralty (*see* that sub-heading); Municipal reforms, proposals, 100-105; Popularity with colleagues, 125, 140; Reputation of the Council previous to Mr. Chamberlain's entry as Councillor, 99; Resignation of seat in 1880, 176, 178
  - Municipal and Political Methods in America: *Nineteenth Century* Articles, 305
  - Muntz, Mr., Birmingham Parliamentary Elections, 32, 33, 172
  - Murphy Riots, suppression of, 64, 65
- NATIONAL EDUCATION LEAGUE, 1869:—
- Chamberlain, Mr., as Vice-President of Provisional Committee, 80
  - Conference at Birmingham, 1869, 75; Mr. Chamberlain's, speech, 77; Forster's Education Bill Discussion, 80, 81
  - Dissolution in 1877: Suggestion to Liberal Party to continue work, 155-6; Forster's

National Education (*cont.*):—

- Education Bill, 25th Clause: Repeal agitation, 84, 85
  - Foundation and objects of the League, 75, 76
  - Inquiries into state of education, 1869, 79
  - Political work, 80
  - Subscription list, contributions from Mr. Chamberlain and Birmingham men, 76
  - National Liberal Federation (*see* Liberal Federation)
  - National Radical Union (*see* Radical Union)
  - Naville, M. de: Transvaal Question from a foreign point of view, 322
  - Nettlefold family, connections with Chamberlain family, 9, 21, 37
  - Nettlefold and Chamberlain: Mr. Chamberlain's entry into firm, 44; Extension of business, Mr. Chamberlain's policy, 38-40; Purchase and amalgamation of screw businesses, Press attacks on transaction, 40-44; Retirement of Chamberlain Bros., 55, 124
  - Newcastle, Mr. Chamberlain's visit, speech on Irish affairs, etc., 207
  - Newfoundland and Canadian Coast Fisheries Dispute (*see* Fisheries Dispute)
  - Newspaper Stamp Duty reduction, 16
  - Newspaper comments (*see* names of papers)
  - Nineteenth Century*, Mr. Chamberlain's articles on Social Problems, 305; List of, 439
  - Nonconformist support of Mr. Chamberlain's Policy:—
    - Home Rule crisis, Dr. Dale on, 261
    - Municipal work in Birmingham, 100, 102
  - Northcote, Sir S., defeat of Liberal Government, 1885, note handed during Mr. Gladstone's speech on the Seats Bill, 216
- OBLIGATIONS of Empire, fulfilment of, Mr. Chamberlain's work as Colonial Secretary, 382

- O'Brien, Mr., Irish Local Government Bill, 1892, Debate, 295
- O'Brien, Mr. W., imprisonment of, suppression of National League, 1887, 275, 276
- O'Connor, Fergus, and the rights of the people for Reform, 29
- Old Age Pensions :—  
 Commission, 1897, Mr. Chamberlain's reference to, 311  
*Nineteenth Century* articles, 1892, 305  
 Prospects of Mr. Holland's Bill in 1899, Leicester Conference, etc., 314  
 Views held by Mr. Chamberlain, speech, 1899, Oddfellows' meeting, 313-315
- Orchid collection at Highbury, 421
- Orme, Mr. T., London University College School, 17, 18
- O'Shea, Captain, letters to Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Chamberlain, Irish Question, replies, 203, 204, 206
- PAGE, MISS :—  
 Camberwell School, education of J. Chamberlain, 11-14  
 Chamberlain's, Mr. and Mrs., visit to, 13
- Pacific Cable Scheme, attention to, by Mr. Chamberlain, 382
- Pall Mall Gazette*, Brookfields Reform Demonstration, 1866, 62
- Parish Councils Bill, 1894, passing as law, 305  
 Chamberlain, Mr., as Member (*see* Parliamentary and Political Career)
- Conservative Government (*see* Salisbury Administration)
- Dissolution, 1880, 171
- Dissolution, 1886, defeat of Home Rule Bill, 260
- Dissolution, 1900, 404
- Duties of a new Govt., 208
- Legislation, tables of measures passed, etc. (*see* Tables of Dates, Measures, etc.)
- Liberal Governments (*see* Gladstone Administration, Rosebery Administration)
- Parliament :—  
 Liberal Unionist and Tory Coalition (*see* that title)  
 Meeting in 1886, defeat of Salisbury Government, 230  
 Meeting after election, 1892, 300  
 Meeting, October 17th, 1899 : Vote of Supplies for South African War, 359 ; Prorogation, 365  
 Procedure, new rules, support by Mr. Chamberlain, 186  
 Session, 1900, Queen's speech : Debate on the address, 371-75 ; Programme for domestic legislation, 370 (*see also* House of Commons, House of Lords)
- Parliamentary Elections (*see* General Elections)
- Parliamentary measures, tables of dates, etc. (*see* Tables of Dates, Measures, etc.)
- Parliamentary and political career :—  
 Bright's, Mr., politics, influence with Mr. Chamberlain, 56, 58, 60, 62, 63 ; Tributes to Mr. Chamberlain, 81, 82, 165  
 Cabinet and Government appointments (*see* that title)  
 Dale's, Dr., representative, reference by Mr. Chamberlain, 102  
 Early Political Work, 1867-69, 64  
 Elected M.P. for Birmingham, 1876, 137 ; First speech to constituents, 138-40 (*see also* Birmingham Constituencies)
- Entry into House of Commons :  
 Ceremony of introduction, 141, 142, 145 ; Maiden Speech, 143-46 ; Mistake in date by Mr. Lucy, 143
- Leadership of the Radicals :  
 Power as a Debater, 186
- Life as a Liberal M.P., 1876-86, Book III., 135
- Life as a Liberal-Unionist, Book II., 265
- Personal duty as a Member of Parliament : speech to constituents, 1876, 140

# Parliamentary and Political career (*cont.*):—

- Political Chief : Work as President of Birmingham Liberal-Unionist Association, 401
- Political programmes (*see* that title)
- Relations with colleagues and opponents, 167, 406, 408
- Resignation proposals, 191, 224
- Secession from Gladstone Government (*see* Gladstone Administration)
- Sheffield constituency, Mr. Chamberlain as candidate, 95, 96
- Tables of dates and events :
  - Municipal and Political work previous to entry into Parliament, 97, 98
- Parliamentary Representation :—
  - Birmingham constituents (*see* that title)
  - Bright on, 57
  - Canvassing at elections, Mr. Muntz' objection, 32, 33
  - Ireland, Mr. Chamberlain on, 195
  - Redistribution of Seats Bill ; Reform Bill (*see* those titles)
- Parnell, Mr. :—
  - Arrest as leader of Land League, 1881 : Imprisonment, 202, 273 ; Release, 203
  - Chamberlain's, Mr., opinion of, speech to Birmingham constituents, 1886, 253
  - Diminution of influence previous to death in 1891 . Mr. Gladstone's statement, 296
  - Home Rule, Irish Question (*see* those titles)
  - Kilmainham Treaty : Negotiations on release of Mr. Parnell from prison, 203
  - Letters published by the *Times*, discovery of "Pigott Forgeries," 292, 293
  - Phoenix Park murders, reference to, in House of Commons, 205
  - Physical Force Party and the Plan of Campaign, 1886, 273-4

- Parnell Commission, 1888 : Appointment of : Letters published by the *Times* Inquiry, 292 ; Debate on Report in House of Commons, 1890 : Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 292, 293 ; Pigott Forgeries, discovery of, 292
- Parnell's Tenant's Relief Bill, 1886, rejection of, 273
- Party and Individualism : Mr. Chamberlain's *Fortnightly* Article on Liberal Federation, 162
- Patents Bill, 1883 : Mr. Chamberlain's work, 187, 188
- Patriotism, Mr. Chamberlain on, Glasgow University Rectorial Address, 1897, 317, 319
- Peace Society, Camberwell School, organisation of, 12, 13, 16
- Peel, Sir Robert, Death of : Mr. Chamberlain's recollection of, 20
- Penny Postage, Establishment of, 16
- Perks, Susannah : General Election, 1885, Birmingham vote, 227
- Personality and character :—
  - Audacity a characteristic : opinion of member of Edgbaston Debating Society, 53
  - Criticism, Mr. Chamberlain's views on, 86, 123
  - Delivery of addresses and speeches to constituents, impression on audience, 399-400
  - Description of personal appearance, 127, 128
  - Early childhood : Description by Miss Pace, 11-14
  - House of Commons, first appearance, impression made, 145
  - Reasons for misapprehension of character, 425-30
  - Rule of life, Mr. Chamberlain's motto, 430
- Phoenix Park Murders, 204 ; Mrs. Byrne and the American-Irish Fête, 974 ; Effect on the Irish Question, 203, 204, 205, 206 ; Mr. Parnell's speech in House of Commons after the crime, 205



- Physical Force party, Mr. Parnell's connection with, 274; Parnell commission report, 1888, Debate, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 293
- Pictures presented to Birmingham Art Gallery by Chamberlain family, 109, 179
- Pigott forgeries, alleged Parnell letters, discovery of, 292, 293
- Pitt, Canning's lines on, Mr. Chamberlain using, during speech at Leicester, 1899, 335
- Plimsoll, Mr., and the shipowners' dispute, 189
- Political agitation and combination, increased facilities for, in 1836-40, 16
- Political education of Mr. Chamberlain :—  
Bright's speeches, etc., influence on, 62, 63  
Edgbaston Debating Society influence, 52  
Studies after retirement from commercial life, 55
- Political life of Mr. Chamberlain (*see* Parliamentary and Political Career)
- Political Programmes :—  
Irish legislation, 1895-1900, Unionist programme, 315  
Original programme on entry into political life, 91-95; Consideration of, 287, 310  
Radical-Unionist programme, Mr. Chamberlain's position in Parliament, 1886, 270, 271  
Rosebery administration, 1892-5, Mr. Chamberlain's social programme, 305  
Tables of dates, measures passed, etc.; Unauthorised programme (*see* those titles)
- Political unions of the Black Country, Reform agitation, 1832, 30
- Polytechnic institution lectures, attendance of Mr. Chamberlain, 20
- Power of the people, Bright on, 58-9
- Press comments (*see* Names of Papers)
- Prisons Bill, 1877, Mr. Chamberlain's first speech in the House of Commons, 145; mistaken date, 143
- Private Life of Mr. Chamberlain :—  
Birmingham incidents, 1854-64, 46, 47, 53, 54, 62  
Chamberlain, Mr., as a friend, 425-30  
Family and relatives, 423-27  
Highbury (*see* that title)  
Holidays, 421  
London life, official duties, etc., 415-16  
Marriage of Mr. Chamberlain (*see* that title)  
Personality and character (*see* that title)  
Southbourne residence, 130-31  
Procedure in the House of Commons, new rules, 186  
Property rights, Mr. Chamberlain's "Ransom" speech (*see* Unauthorised Programme)  
Public opinion and criticism, Mr. Chamberlain's views on, 86, 123  
Public-house municipalisation (*see* Gothenburg System)  
*Punch* cartoons, verses, etc. :—  
Birmingham Education Society, commendation verses, 79  
Reform Scheme, 1866, "Mr. and Mrs. Bull and their dog," 60  
Visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Birmingham, Mr. Chamberlain's reception, 107
- RADICAL UNION :—  
Addresses presented to Mr. Chamberlain on return from America, 279-81  
Foundation of the Union, 267  
Inaugural meeting, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 269  
Outlines of policy, manifesto issued, 269
- Radical members of a Liberal Government, difficulties of, Mr. Chamberlain on, 225
- Radical Unionist, Mr. Chamberlain's life as, Book IV., 265
- Radicalism, influences affecting Chamberlain's policy, 62, 63
- Radicals :—  
Chamberlain's advanced Liberal Programme, speech to Ward electors, 1872, 91, 92

Radicals (*cont.*) :—

General Election, 1880, results :  
Formation of the Cabinet,  
Mr. Gladstone and Radical  
appointments, 175 ; Sectional  
divisions of the Liberal Party,  
174

Leadership of Mr. Chamberlain,  
power in the House of Com-  
mons, 1880-85, 186 (*see also*  
Liberal-Unionists)

Railway Extensions in the Colonies  
since Mr. Chamberlain took office,  
381, 382

"Ransom" Speech, Birmingham,  
1885, 217

Recreation and Culture for Working  
Population, Mr. Chamberlain's  
work as Mayor, etc., 107, 125

Redistribution of Seats Bill, 1885,  
197 ; Mr. Gladstone's appeal to  
Opposition after defeat of Govern-  
ment, 1885, 216 ; Mr. Parnell's  
views, effect on Irish Question, 207

Redmond, Mr. W., South African  
War, Debate, October 19th, 1899,  
and subsequent withdrawal from  
the House, 364.

## Reform Agitations :—

Chamberlain's, Mr., advanced  
Liberal Programme, *Fort-*  
*nightly* articles, etc., 91-95

Electoral Reform Congress,  
1872, Mr. Chamberlain as  
Delegate, 88, 89

Meetings in 1832 : Black  
Country Political Unions  
Meeting, 30 ; Birmingham,  
28 ; Scots Greys stationed in  
Birmingham, 29-31

Second Reform Bill Agitation,  
32 ; Bright's First Speech to  
Constituents, 57, 59 ; Letter,  
60 ; Brookfields Demonstra-  
tion, 1866, 61 ; Press Com-  
ments, 62 ; Liberal Associa-  
tion formed, 1865, 60

Reform Bill, 1832 : Passing as Law,  
Birmingham Parliamentary Repre-  
sentative, 31 ; Political Unions  
Meeting previous to passing the  
Bill, 30 ; Reforms enacted after  
Reform Bill, 15

Reform Bill, 1860 : Abandonment  
of Scheme, 59

Reform Bill (second), 1867 : Meet-  
ings previous to (*see* Reform  
Agitation) ; Passing as Law, 32,  
62

Religion of the Chamberlain  
Family, 9

Republicanism of Mr. Chamber-  
lain :—

Congratulations offered to  
French Nation, 88

Electoral Reform Congress, Mr.  
Chamberlain as Delegate,  
explanation, 88

English Radical Leaders, 1875,  
Notices, 90

Nature of Mr. Chamberlain's  
views, 88-90

Wales's, Prince and Princess  
of, visit to Birmingham, Mr.  
Chamberlain's reception, 88,  
105, 107

Reitz, Mr., Suzerainty Question,  
Transvaal, 344

Rhodes, Mr., and the Jameson Raid  
Inquiry :—

Censure of Mr. Rhodes' conduct  
in Report, 330, 331

Chamberlain's, Mr., Speech on  
attempt to reopen Inquiry,  
Mr. Rhodes' "Personal  
Honour," 333, 334

Chartered Company Telegrams,  
Mr. Rhodes' refusal to pro-  
duce copies of missing wires,  
etc., 331, 332

Ridley, Sir M. W. : Workmen's  
Compensation Bill, 1897 (*see* that  
title)

Roberts, Sir F. : Boer War, 1881-84,  
209

Robinson, Sir H. (*see* Jameson  
Raid)

Rochdale, Mr. Bright's and Mr.  
Chamberlain's visit to, Speeches  
on Liberal Federation, etc., 1877,  
164, 165

Roebuck, Mr. : Sheffield Election,  
Opposition to Mr. Chamberlain,  
96

Roman Catholic Education, Mr.  
Chamberlain on, 78

## Rosebery, Lord :

Chamberlain's, Mr., Political Position, reference to, 408

South African War: Deficiencies in British military system, Lord Salisbury's attitude, 371  
Visit to Mr. Chamberlain at Southborne, 131

## Rosebery Administration :—

Chamberlain's, Mr., social programme, Press Articles, etc., 1892-5, 305

Domestic Legislation, 305, 306

Formation of Government after resignation of Mr. Gladstone, 1894, 304

Government defeat, 1895 :  
Motion on inadequate supply of small arms ammunition, 304, 307

House of Lords' power : agitation against, 306

## Round Table Conference, 1887 :

Consideration of points of difference on Home Rule, Liberal Party, 272

Royal Colonial Institute Dinner, 1897 : Mr. Chamberlain on acceptance of Colonial Secretaryship, 379

Rule of life : Mr. Chamberlain's motto, 430

Russo-Turkish War, British policy :  
Mr. Chamberlain on, 169, 170

## SALISBURY, LORD :—

Cabinet appointment on resignation of Lord Derby, 169

Franchise Bill, 1884, rejection :  
Public protest, etc., Mr. Chamberlain's criticism, 196

Relations between Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Salisbury, 406, 407

South African War: Debate, Oct. 17th, 1899—Vote of supplies, 360; Settlement after the War, 377

## Salisbury Administration :—

Government, 1885 : Stop-gap Government after Liberal defeat; Cabinet formation difficulties, 215; Lord R.

Salisbury Administration (*cont.*) :—

Churchill's attitude, 216; Mr. Chamberlain on, 220; Defeat in 1886: Attitude of the House on the Irish Question, 230; Pledge required by Lord Salisbury: Non-embarrassment of opposition, request to Mr. Gladstone, 216, 217

Government, 1886: Cabinet formation, 271; Legislation, 1888-92; Review by Mr. Chamberlain and Table of Measures passed, etc., 286, 287; Liberal-Unionist and Tory coalition (*see* that title); Policy of, Mr. Chamberlain's attitude towards, 272

Government of 1895-1900: Liberal-Unionist relations with, appointments made, etc., 308, 309; Programme for Session, 1900, Lord Rosebery's attack, 370-371; Vote of supplies for South African War, Debate, 359-360

Sandon's, Lord, Education Bill :  
Mr. Chamberlain's first speech in House of Commons on, 143, 144

Sanitary Congress, Birmingham :  
Mr. Chamberlain's work in connection with, 109

*Saturday Review*, Workmen's Compensation Bill, 1897, Mr. Chamberlain's activity regarding, 312

## Schnadhorst, Mr. :—

Birmingham testimonials to, 166

Liberal Federation, influence on organisation, 165, 267

Liberal Party Division 1886 :  
Severance of political ties with Mr. Chamberlain, 267

Secretaryship of the "Caucas Liberal Association, 67

Scholefield, Mr. W. : Death of, 62; Parliamentary representation for Birmingham, 31

School Boards, establishment of, 82-84

School contemporaries of Mr. Chamberlain, 19

School life (*see* Education of Mr. Chamberlain)

Schools :—

Free Schools, Mr. Chamberlain's political programmes, *Fortnightly* Articles, etc., 91-95, 287, 310

Work in Birmingham, 45

Scotland : Mr. Chamberlain's visits :—

Electioneering Campaign, 1885, unauthorised programme, 217

Tour in 1887 : Speech at Ayr on the Crimes Act, scene in the hall, 274

Scots Greys stationed in Birmingham during Reform agitation, 1832, 29, 30, 31

Screw Trade :—

Chamberlain's, Mr., connection and retirement from business, 37, 40, 55, 124

Difficulties in 1854 : Mr. Chamberlain's policy for improvement of trade, 38-40

Purchase and amalgamation of Firms by Nettlefold & Chamberlain : Press attacks, 40-44

Seamen's Wages Bill, 1880 : Mr. Chamberlain's Influence, 187

Seats Bill (*see* Redistribution of Seats Bill)

Sentiment, Mr. Chamberlain's views on influence of flag floating over Colonial Office, Ladysmith Day, 375 ; "Leicester" Speech : Sentiment ruling the world, 39

Serjeant, Richard : Connection with Chamberlain Family, 5 ; Descendants, erection of memorial tablet, 9

Shaw, Miss Flora : Jameson Raid Inquiry, 332

Sheffield constituency : Mr. Chamberlain as candidate, 95, 96

Shepstone, Sir T. : Annexation of the Transvaal, 1877, 209

Shipping : Grain Cargoes Shipment Act passed in 1880, 187 ; Merchant Shipping Bill (*see* that title)

Slaves in British colonies, emancipation of, 15

Small arms ammunition, inadequate supply, motion and defeat of Rosebery Government, 1895, 307

South Africa :—

Cape Colony (*see* that title)

Jameson Raid (*see* that title)

Milner's, Sir A., appointment as High Commissioner : Mr. Chamberlain's speech at farewell banquet, 338, 339 ; Duties as High Commissioner, 340

Railway extensions during Mr. Chamberlain's office as Colonial Secretary, 381, 382

Transvaal previous to the war, 1899 (*see* Transvaal)

Zulu War, Mr. Chamberlain's disapproval, 170

South African War :—

British military system, deficiencies in defence, Debate in Parliament, 1900, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, etc., 371-5 ; Press comments, 372

British relations with Germany and America : Mr. Chamberlain's "Leicester" speech, 365-367 ; Criticism, 367-368

Cape Colony to remain neutral, Mr. Schreiner's proclamation, 351

Chamberlain's, Mr., address to electors, 1900, 440-444

Colonial support : Offers made through the Colonial Office, 358 ; Mr. Balfour on ; Debate, October 1899, 360, 363 ; Mr. Chamberlain's references to, 360, 363, 373 ; Queen's acknowledgment, opening address, Australian Federal Parliament, 392

Declaration of War, Boer Ultimatum, 352, 353, 358

Franchise dispute, alleged cause of, consideration of real question at issue, 354

Johannesburg and Pretoria, fall of, 376, 377

Ladysmith Day, scene in London, flag floating over Colonial Office, 375

South African War (*cont.*):—

Mafeking Day, rejoicings in the country and scene in the House of Commons, 376

Majuba Day, 375

Negotiations previous to the war (*see* Transvaal Crisis)

Orange Free State: Declaration of support of Transvaal Republic, 351; Proclaimed a British Dependency, 377

Parliamentary Debates (October 17-19), 1899: Attack on the Ministry, unpreparedness for War, etc., 359, 360; Mr. Chamberlain's policy and negotiations, attack on; Mr. Chamberlain's reply, 361-364; Press comments, 364-65

Parliamentary Session, 1900, Debate on the address, deficiencies in system of defence, etc., 371-75

Peace proposals from the enemy after relief of Ladysmith, Lord Salisbury's reply, 376

Pretoria correspondence, discovery of, opinions of Colonial officials and British Members of Parliament on the war, 354-58

Pretoria, Fall of, 376, 377

Responsibility for the war: Colonial Secretary, attacks on, 358, 370; Kruger's responsibility, 353-4; Pretoria correspondence on, 354-8

Reverses during early period of war, depression in Great Britain and attacks on Lord Lansdowne's and Mr. Chamberlain's policy, 370

Settlement after the war: Mr. Chamberlain's reference to, Debate on the Address, 1900, 374; Lord Salisbury on, 377

Tables of dates and events: Chronological table, 1889-1900, 433, 444; England and Transvaal, 1881-1900, 435-8

Transvaal proclaimed a British Colony, flight of President Kruger, etc., 377

Socialism, Mr. Chamberlain on, speech at Warrington, 1885, 221  
Somerville, A., Reform agitation, 1832, 31

Soudan, General Gordon's expedition and subsequent death, effect on British politics, 212, 213

Southbourne, Mr. Chamberlain's residence at, 130, 131

Speeches, Addresses, etc.:—

Delivery, Debate, etc.: Mr Chamberlain's power, Birmingham man's opinion, rowdy meeting at Stourbridge, 400; Birmingham Workmen's Debating Club speeches, criticism by member, 45, 46; Choice of words, difficulty at School of Arts speech, 1899, 369; Constituency speeches, impression on audience, 399-400; Dr. Dale's criticism, 225; Edgbaston Debating Society, criticism, 49, 50, 53; House of Commons, debating power, etc., 146, 153, 154, 186

First speech, 1868, Birmingham Liberal Election Committee dinner, 67

First speech to constituents, 138-40

"Leicester" speech (*see* that title)

Maiden speech, House of Commons, 143-6

"Ransom" speech: The unauthorised programme, 217; *Times* on, 219

Reporting of Mr. Chamberlain's speeches, attention paid to, 86 [For speeches on special subjects *see* names of subjects]

Spooner, Mr., Parliamentary representative for Birmingham, 32, 33, 62

*Standard*, Home Rule Comments:—  
Bill of 1886, 243, 244

Publication of alleged scheme by Mr. Gladstone, 1885, 228; Criticism by Mr. Chamberlain, 229

Stanhope, Mr. P., South African War, Debate, October 18th, 1899, attack on Mr. Chamberlain's policy, 361, 363, 364

Steyn, President, attitude towards Britain, period of Jameson Raid, 326; Orange Free State and the South African War (*see* South African War)

Stokes & Co., Press attack on Mr. Chamberlain's commercial policy, 1884, defence, 43

Sturge, Joseph, establishment of Adult Schools, Birmingham, 35

Sturge, Miss, Birmingham School Board membership, 84

Success in life, Mr. Chamberlain's friends and supporters, 130

Sugar Bounties Question, Mr. Chamberlain's attention to, 382

Swansea, visit of Mr. Chamberlain in 1883, 192

TABLE of dates and events, Mr. Chamberlain's political and Municipal work previous to entry into Parliament, 97, 98

Table of Dates, measures, etc. :—

- Chronological table, events, 1889-1900, 433, 434
- Domestic legislation, 1888-92, measures passed by Salisbury Government with Unionist support, 286, 287
- England and the Transvaal, events, 1881-1900, 435-38
- Irish legislation, 1887-92, Unionist list, 296
- Parliamentary Session, 1886-87, 232, 233

Table of members returned at General Election, 1885-95, 301

Taxation, graduated, Mr. Chamberlain's proposal in "Unauthorised Programme," 217

Temperance Reform (*see* Gothenburg System)

Temple, Dr., foundation of Birmingham Education Society, 74, 77

Tenants' Relief (Ireland) Parnell's Bill, 1886, rejection of, 273

*The Dart*, Birmingham Town Council, account of scene in, 126

"The man who puts things straight," Bechuanaland chieftain's description of Mr. Chamberlain, 410

*Times* Comments: Australian Commonwealth Bill, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 391; Chamberlain's Mr., unauthorised programme and speeches, 219, 221; Home Rule Bill, 243, 244; Mr. Chamberlain's speech to constituents, 256; Jameson Raid: Inquiry, condemnation of Mr. Rhodes' conduct, 334; National Union letter to Dr. Jameson, Publication of, 324

Trade and commerce, development of, Mr. Chamberlain's Colonial Policy, 379-81; Commercial Union proposal, Congress of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, 1896, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 384

Transvaal and England, table of dates and events, 1881-1900, 435-38

Transvaal Aid Committee Meeting, denunciation of Col. Sec. 370.

Transvaal at period of Gladstone Administration, 1880-84 :—

- Annexation by Sir T. Shepstone, 1877; Boer War, 1881-84, revolt against annexation, 209; Sir. G. Wolseley's observation, British flag floating over Transvaal, 210
- Independence of the State granted by Gladstone Govt. British suzerainty agreement, 209-10; Mr. Chamberlain's attitude towards Gladstone's policy, 210; Kruger appointed President, 209
- Kruger's, President, invitation to settlers, 1884: Outlanders' demands, 321, 322
- London Convention, 1884 :—
- British suzerainty agreement, 210; Infringements by the Boers, Mr. Chamberlain on, 328, 362; Outlanders' position after the convention, 321
- Pretoria convention: Protests from Kruger and others, President Kruger's visit to England, 1884, 210

Transvaal Crisis — Outlanders' grievances, etc. :—

Alien Immigration Act, 1896,  
Dispute : Mr. Chamberlain's  
protests and reply to Boer  
Despatch, 337, 338

Arbitration claim (*see* sub-  
heading Suzerainty and Ar-  
bitration Claims)

Bloemfontein Conference :—

Chamberlain, Mr., on the pub-  
lication of Despatches, etc.,  
Debate, Oct. 19th, 1899,  
363

Close of the Conference, Sir  
A. Milner's reply to Mr.  
Kruger's proposals, 345, 346 ;  
Kruger's attitude regarding  
Franchise Question : Sir A.  
Milner's reply, 344, 5 ; Sir A.  
Milner's report, 346 ; Propo-  
sal for Conference : Sir A.  
Milner's Despatch, May 4th,  
1899, 343 ; Sir H. Villier's let-  
ters previous to and after the  
Conference : Discovery of Pre-  
toria correspondence, 356-7

British Government formulating  
own proposals : Col. Office  
Despatch B., Boer reply, 350

British Interference with in-  
ternal affairs of the Republic,  
alleged : Kruger's reply to  
Despatch, 1896, 328 ; Suze-  
rainty and Arbitration claims  
(*see* that subheading)

Chronological Table of Events,  
1889-1900, 433, 434

Comparison of relative posi-  
tions of Dutchmen in Cape  
Colony and Englishmen in  
the Transvaal, 340

Cape Colony to remain neutral  
in event of war : Mr.  
Schreiner's Proclamation, 351  
Debate in Parliament, Oct.  
17th to 19th, 1899 ; Attack  
on the Ministry, unprepared-  
ness for war, etc., 359-63 ;  
Mr. Chamberlain's reply to  
attack on policy ; Summary  
of negotiations, 361-4 ; Press  
comments, 364-5

Transvaal Crisis, etc. (*cont.*) :—

Declaration of war : Boer ulti-  
matum, 347, 351, 352, 353, 358  
Dutch of Cape Colony, disloyal  
propaganda : Sir A. Milner's  
Despatch, Mr. Chamberlain's  
observation, 343

Final negotiations, 347

Despatch C. from Great  
Britain : Boer reply and ulti-  
matum, 351, 352, 353, 358 ;  
Unsettled state of the coun-  
try : Appeals for protection,  
etc., 351

Franchise proposals : President  
Kruger's Five Years Con-  
ditional Franchise Proposal,  
318 ; Mr. Chamberlain's  
Highbury speech : Warning  
to Kruger, 348 ; Colonial  
Office Despatch A. : Boer  
reply, 349 ; Colonial Office  
Despatch B. : Boer reply, 350 ;  
President Kruger's Seven  
Years proposal, Bloemfontein  
Conference, 345 ; Sir A.  
Milner's Five Years Proposal,  
Bloemfontein Conference,  
345, 350, 351 ; Petitions from  
Outlanders (*see* that sub-  
heading)

German Emperor's telegram to  
President Kruger, 326

Jameson Raid, 1896 (*see* that  
title)

Kruger's, President, attitude  
throughout negotiations, 347,  
348, 352 ; Pretoria, corre-  
spondence on, 354-58

London Convention : Infringe-  
ments by the Boers, Mr.  
Chamberlain on, 328, 362 ;  
Suzerainty Agreement, 210

Milner's, Sir A., investigations  
on appointment as High  
Commissioner, 340 ; Mr.  
Chamberlain's speech, 339

National Union formation, 323

Naville, M. de, on the Transvaal  
Question from a foreign point  
of view, 322

Orange Free State : Declara-  
tion of support of Transvaal

Transvaal Crisis, etc. (*cont.*):—

in event of war, 351; Negotiations with President Kruger, Jameson Raid period, 326

## Petitions from Outlanders:

Franchise petition in 1895, Reception by the Raad, 322; Murder of Edgar, Outlanders' petition for protection, etc., 1889, 341, 342; Second petition, 1889, first appeal to Suzerain power since 1881, British reply, 342, 343

Position of affairs, 1897, summary of, 339

Pretoria correspondence, discovery of letters from Colonial officials and British Members of Parliament, etc., 354-8

Settlement of Questions: Peaceful settlement the desire of British Government, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, Debate in Parliament, 346, 347; Press comments, 347; Reminder by Mr. Chamberlain in House of Commons, Debate, October 19th, 1899, 363; Settlement without interference with Independence of Republic, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, 1896, 328

Suzerainty and Arbitration claims, repudiation of the Suzerainty by the Boers: Basis of claim, London Convention, 210, 338, 343; Boer determination to dispute British power, Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Salisbury on, 360, 362; Volksraad declaration, 344; Mr. Chamberlain's contradiction of claim, 339, 344, 349, 350; Essential importance of the Suzerainty, Mr. Chamberlain's speech, Debate, October 19th, 1899, 353; Sir W. Harcourt's attack on Chamberlain negotiations, Debate, October 18th, 1899, 361, 362; President Kruger's despatch on the Alien Immigration Act, 1896, 338, 343;

Transvaal Crisis, etc. (*cont.*):—

Dr. Leyds' and Mr. Reitz' assertions, comments by Sir A. Milner in despatch, 1899 343, 344; Sir A. Milner's despatch to Mr. Chamberlain, June 14th, 1899) 344; Refusal of British Government to discuss question, 344; Colonial Office Despatches A. and B., Boer replies, 349, 350

Ultimatum: Boer reply to Colonial Despatch C., 351, 352, 353, 358

Transvaal War (*see* S. African War) Trevelyan, Sir G., chief secretary for Ireland appointment, 206

Tropical diseases, study of, establishment of institution at Greenwich, Mr. Chamberlain's interest in, 383

*Truth* comments on Home Rule Bill (2nd), 304

Turkey (*see* Eastern Question, 1877)

ULSTER, Mr. Chamberlain's visit to, 277

Unauthorised programme, Mr. Chamberlain's electioneering campaign, 1885:—

Birmingham speech, Dr. Dale's criticism, etc., 217, 219, 225

Bradford speech, 224

Comparison of items with list of measures passed between 1888-92, 287

Completion of section for domestic legislation, 306

Conclusion of campaign, explanation of policy, London speech, 223

Conservative opinion and attitude, Mr. Chamberlain on, 219, 220

Favour with the people, 220

Glasgow speech, obligations of the Government to the poor, 222

Ipswich and Hackney speeches, reply to *Times* criticism, 219

Liberal official programme, criticism by Mr. Chamberlain, 221



Unauthorised programme (*cont.*):—

Liberal Party acceptance of unauthorised programme, Mr. Chamberlain's proposal of resignation, 224

London speech, explanation of policy, 223

"Ransom" speech, Birmingham, 217, 225; *Times* on, 219

Warrington speech, Party and Press criticism, etc., 221: Parnell's programme, refusal of Mr. Chamberlain to consider, 222

Union Jack floating over Colonial Office, Ladysmith Day, 375

Union Jack sent to Canadian settler, Mr. Chamberlain's appreciation of loyalty, 413

Unionists (*see* Liberal Unionists)

Unitarian community in Birmingham:—

Chamberlain's, Mr., work among, 45

Influence of, 47

United States:—

British relations with, Mr. Chamberlain on, 280; Leicester speech, 366; Criticism, 367-68

Chamberlain's, Mr., Visits: Fisheries Question settlement, 278, 279; Marriage with Miss Endicott, 283, 285; Meeting of old Birmingham pupils, 46, 285

Sugar bounties, reciprocity treaties with West Indies, 382

University honours (*see* Honorary Degrees; *also* Names of Universities)

University training: Mr. Chamberlain's disability as a Dissenter, 19

*Vanity Fair* cartoon, Mr. Chamberlain's entry into Parliament, 146

Verse: Quotations, etc.:—

Birmingham doggerel verses, etc., General Election, 1880, 172

Verse, Quotations, etc. (*cont.*):—

Birmingham *Town Crier*: "Judicious Joseph," and the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Birmingham, 107; "Modern Ulysses," Mr. Chamberlain's defeat, Sheffield Election, 96

Canning's Lines on Pitt, 335

Freeth's Poems on Birmingham, volunteer movement, etc., 27, 35

"I can't find Brummagem" · Growth of the city of Birmingham, 26

*Punch* verses (*see* *Punch* Cartoons, verses, etc.)

Reform Agitation, 1832: Hymn of the Unions, 30

"Vote-as-you're-told," publication of verses by Liberal Association, General Election, 1880, 173

Warwickshire Volunteer song, 36

Victorian Era, reforms previous to, 15

Villiers, Sir H. J. H.: Pretoria correspondence, Transvaal Crisis negotiations, 356

Villiers, Mr. Mellins: Pretoria correspondence, Transvaal Crisis negotiations, 357

Vince, Rev. C.: Criticism on *Punch* Cartoon, Reform Scheme, 1866, 61

Voluntary schools, Grant in aid, 1896, support of Mr. Chamberlain, etc., 288-90

Volunteer Movement:—

Birmingham support, verses by Freeth, etc., 35, 36

Edgbaston Debating Society proposed Corps: Mr. Chamberlain's proposal refused, 50, 54

"Vote-as-you're-told" electioneering patent, accusation against Mr. Chamberlain, 96, 97

Verses published by Liberal Association, Election, 1880, 173

- WALES, PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF :  
Visit to Birmingham, 1874 ; Reception by Mr. Chamberlain as Mayor, 88, 105, 107
- War and the Effect of Home Rule for Ireland : Mr. Chamberlain's reference in speech, Debate on Second Home Rule Bill, 1893, 302, 303
- Warrington : Mr. Chamberlain's speech, Electioneering Campaign, 1885, 221, 222
- Warwickshire (North) Registration Society membership, 62
- Water, Gas, and Improvement Scheme, Birmingham (*see* Gas, Water and Improvement Scheme)
- Wellington's, Duke of, death : Mr. Chamberlain's recollection, 20
- Wesleyan Body in London, Mr. Chamberlain invited to preside at meeting, withdrawal of invitation, 416-19
- West African Colonies (*see* Africa)
- West Indian Colonies, Mr. Chamberlain's policy with, 382
- White, Mr. : Sanitary condition of Birmingham, Report, 120
- Williams, Mr. Powell :—  
Financial Secretary to the War Office Appointment, 309  
General Election, 1885, Birmingham candidate, 227
- Wolseley, Lord :—  
Gordon Relief Expedition, 213  
Transvaal Annexation, 1877, British flag floating over the Transvaal, observation, 210
- Women's Political Union, formation of Birmingham Society, 1837, 32
- Wood, Sir E. : Boer War, troubles in 1880-84 in the Transvaal, 209
- Working Classes :—  
Chamberlain's, Mr., first speech to constituents, 140  
Housing of the Working Classes (*see* that title)
- Working Classes (*cont.*) :—  
Legislation for : Mr. Chamberlain's support : Free Labour, etc., proposal, *Fortnightly* Article, 91-95 ; Consideration of, 287, 310 ; Social Programme, completion of, Measures passed in 1888-92, 286-9 ; Work done after Appointment as Colonial Secretary, 309  
Recreation and culture, Mr. Chamberlain's work as Mayor of Birmingham, 107
- Working-man's opinion of Mr. Chamberlain, 181, 182
- Workmen as politicians, experience of Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Bright, 19
- Workmen's Compensation Act :—  
Birmingham Trades Council Conference, 310  
Chamberlain's, Mr., work in connection with, 309, 310  
Principle of compensation, Mr. Chamberlain's criticism of legislation, 1894, 311, 312 ; Press comments, 312
- Workmen's Compensation (Asquith's) Bill, criticism by Mr. Chamberlain, 311
- Wright, Mr. J. S., death of, after election as Birmingham Parliamentary member, 182
- Wyndham, Mr., defence of the War Office methods, Debate on the address, 1900, 371
- YORK, DUKE OF, opening of the Australian Federal Parliament, arrangements, 392
- Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society, Mr. Chamberlain as president, 45
- ZULU WAR, colonists' position and Mr. Chamberlain's disapproval of the war, 170







